

THE LITTLE LEAD SOLDIER



ANNA FRANCHI



Class PZ 7

Book F 846

Copyright No. L 1

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT



“ WHERE AM I ? ”

THE LITTLE LEAD
SOLDIER

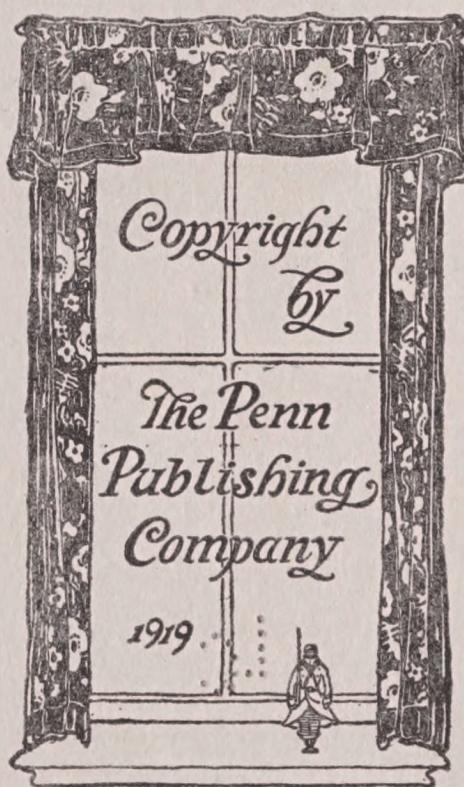
By Anna Franchi



Pictured By
HATTIE LONGSTREET PRICE

THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA
1919

PZ7
F 846
Lil



DEC -5 1919

The Little Lead Soldier

©CL.A536854

1108 Dec. 1919



Translator's Note

Anna Franchi was born at Leghorn in 1867. Her first literary work, "Per Amore," is a drama which was published with great success in 1896 by The Domini Company at Leghorn. Other well-known books are "Dulcia Tristia" and "Arte ed Artiste Toscani." Her story, "I Viaggi d'un Soldatino di Piombo," which is presented here for the first time in English, has had a wide success among young people in Italy. The author resides at present in Milan, and is a member of the Association of Journalists of that city.

S. F. WOODRUFF.



CONTENTS

I.	UNCLE BENEDICT'S PRESENT	9
II.	TAMBURINO'S FIRST ADVENTURE	17
III.	TAMBURINO'S BIRTH AND FIRST FRIENDS	25
IV.	AT THE NORTH POLE	39
V.	A NEW MASTER	53
VI.	THE DANGERS OF ICELAND	65
VII.	FROM NORTH TO SOUTH	73
VIII.	AT QUEEN POMARE'S COURT	85
IX.	IN CHINA	95
X.	IN THE CHINESE COURT	109
XI.	ON THE WAY TO PERSIA	117
XII.	TAMBURINO FALLS INTO BAD HANDS	125
XIII.	AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA	129
XIV.	TREACHERY	143
XV.	THE FALSE PEARL	151
XVI.	AMONG THE ROBBERS	161
XVII.	TAMBURINO IS WORSHIPPED AS A GOD	169
XVIII.	THE DESERT ON THE WAY TO ALGIERS	177
XIX.	THE CONCLUSION	183



ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
<i>Frontispiece</i>	
“Where am I?”	11
Uncle Benedict’s present	13
“No, thanks, you may keep it”	16
“He’ll amuse you”	20
Altogether a good-looking soldier	27
There were a dozen like me	35
“You shall go with me”	41
The ship on which we sailed	43
When I fell out they all cheered	56
In an ocean full of ice	58
Some of the animals fled	67
He held me in his hand	82
A regular tussle resulted	87
I found I could move	88
I was too late	92
From one orange to another	99
On a pile of cushions	113
“You and my dove shall always follow me”	122
I was left forgotten	128
Dragged furiously through the water	135
A mound of oysters	148
They dined most joyously	154
He found the pearl	164
He was immensely careful of me	171
This time they heard distinctly	174
The great desert	179
A long line of camels	



THE
LITTLE LEAD SOLDIER



I. Uncle Benedict's Present

THE LITTLE LEAD SOLDIER



CHAPTER I

UNCLE BENEDICT'S PRESENT

WITH the sun pouring into their little rooms Nino and Lena eagerly jumped out of bed on Christmas morning expecting their usual present from Uncle Benedict, Captain of Marines. It came by the first mail.

There it was. The little parcel was addressed in the same large straight writing as the letter.

“What can it be?” said Lena, a slight little girl about eleven years old.

The Little Lead Soldier

"Something pretty small," answered Nino, a lively, mischievous little fellow about two years older. "Let's look. No, let's read the letter."

"Let's look first; we can read the letter later."

Not being able to wait any longer they broke the blue ribbon that tied the package and both snatched it at the same time. Nino had got the ribbon into a hard knot and Lena tried to untie it.

"Disagreeable thing!"

"Clumsy!"

"You're the clumsy one. Here, give it to me, I can untie it. Men never know how to do anything."

"And girls are all as silly as you."

"If you don't keep still I shall call Mama."

"You needn't bother, I'll call her myself."

And just then the box fell on the floor and out rolled a little soldier.

"Ugh! what a beautiful present."

"Is that all that Uncle has sent us for Christmas?"

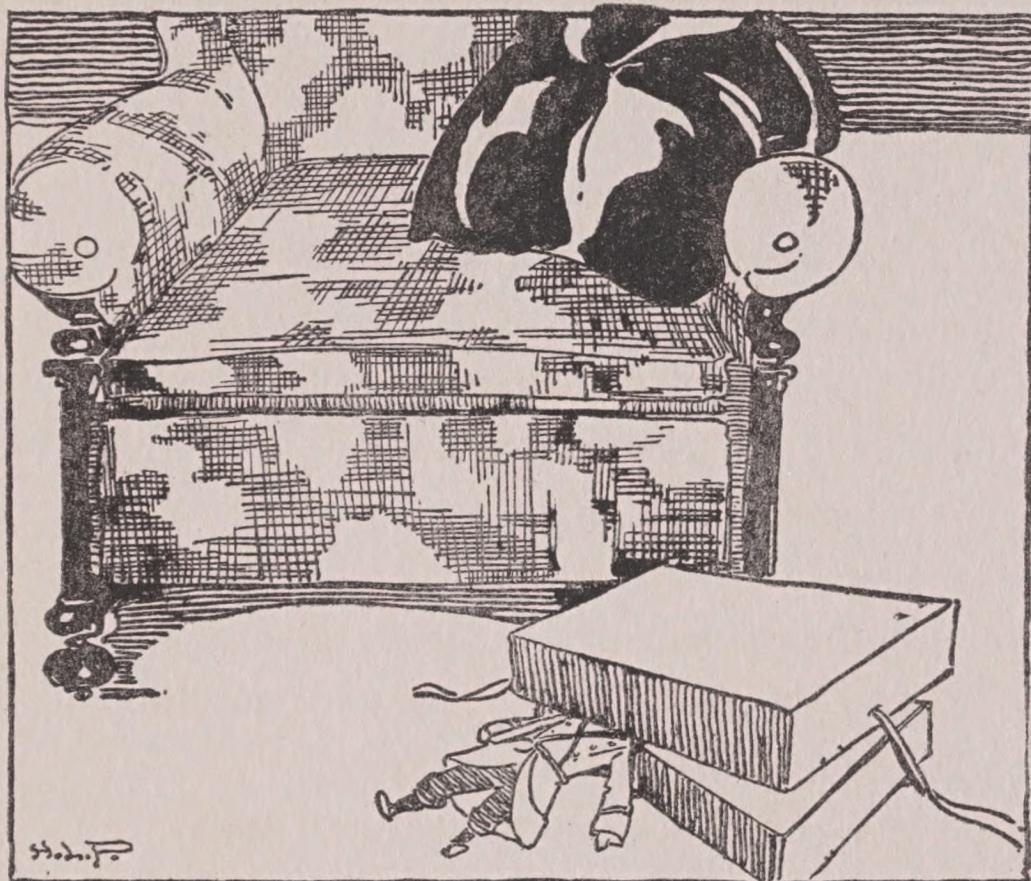
"A little lead soldier!"

"And so ugly!"

"Old!"

"Dirty!"

Uncle Benedict's Present



“ Battered ! ”

“ You may have it,” said Lena.

“ No, thanks, you may keep it.”

“ But let's see what is in the letter.”

“ Sure enough.”

But that was not the end of their quarrel. The postage stamp was one they had never seen before, and while they were disputing about where it had come

The Little Lead Soldier

from the little soldier lay on the floor, his head caught between the box and the cover. After they succeeded in tearing the stamp in two so that it was no good to either of them, they opened and read the letter.

“Algiers, Dec. 20, 19—

“MY DEAR NEPHEW AND NIECE:

“Thank you for your presents and good wishes.

“This year I wanted to give you something better than I ever did before. Your mother told me you had been studying so hard you deserved something finer than usual. I have thought about it a great deal.”

They stopped reading and looked at each other wonderingly. Was this thing lying despised on the floor the “finer than usual” present?

But they read on.

“After going through all the shops and not finding anything good enough, or what I wanted, and having poked about all the bookstores to find an amusing book —”

“He discovered this beautiful object,” broke out Nino.

“Go on, go on.”

Uncle Benedict's Present

"I was truly discouraged, and had about decided on a dress for Lena and something else for Nino, when quite by accident I met an old Arab whom I used to know in Alexandria and who sold me the little ivory babies I sent you last year. He ran up to me whispering mysteriously: 'This year I have something truly beautiful for your nephew and niece,' and he drew out of his bag a little box which he opened very cautiously—and inside there lay a battered, little, old, lead soldier.

"It made me laugh. 'Beggar of an Ali, are you making fun of me?' 'Allah forbid,' he replied, and began to tell me about the plaything. It was the last one left of a whole army of lead soldiers. It had been through a thousand adventures. It had traveled over land and sea, it had been in Iceland, in Asia, in Africa, and it had seen strange things in the bottom of the ocean, and what was more wonderful it had the great gift of telling about its voyages.

"The price was very large, but after he had proved to me that he spoke the truth about the wonderful little soldier I decided to buy it, knowing how happy it would make you.

"You'll find it all out for yourselves. He's had no end of experiences. He's talked to the white bears of Spitzbergen, he has crossed deserts, making himself useful to every one who treated him well. Because he was so little he could go anywhere without being seen, and he remembers everything. Don't ask too much

The Little Lead Soldier

of him, and he'll amuse you more than all the stories you have read in books.

“With Christmas wishes from your affectionate
“UNCLE BENEDICT.”





II. Tamburino's First Adventure

CHAPTER II

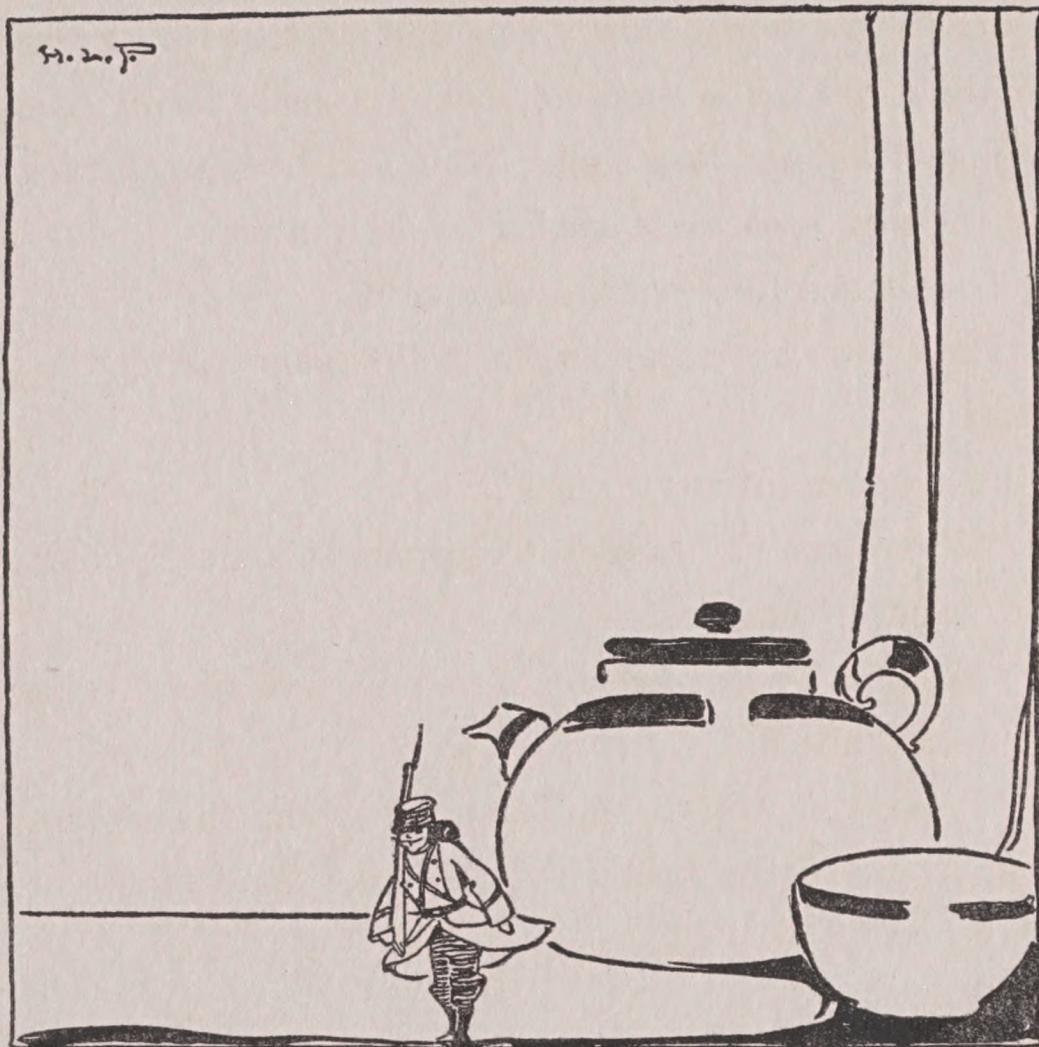
TAMBURINO'S FIRST ADVENTURE

THE children looked at each other, not knowing what to think, and half afraid to pick up the little piece of lead capable of doing such wonderful things.

At last Nino, being a boy and older than Lena, got courage to stoop down and pick up the little soldier and put him on the table, making a little bed for him of the cotton wadding in the bottom of the box. Then they walked around him, wondering how they could talk so as to suit his military knowledge and yet anxious to hear what kind of a voice could come from that tiny body.

He was like one of those soldiers that come in boxes by the dozen—the kind that boys love to put out in battle array and shoot at with paper cannon-balls. He was larger than they usually come, and dressed in the uniform of the French army, red trousers and blue

The Little Lead Soldier



coat. He was graceful, and if he hadn't been battered would have looked quite stout. He had broad shoulders and strong arms and small feet. Altogether a good looking soldier, but a little too old.

While the children stood wondering, this, the largest, the most famous and wonderful of all the lead sol-

Tamburino's First Adventure

diers in the world slowly rose and stretched his arms. Without taking a step he looked wearily about him and gave a long, deep sigh. Nino and Lena sank back on the sofa, speechless, gazing at each other.

The little soldier continued to sigh.

Then Nino got up and went to the table, asking very gently :

“ Do you want anything ? ”

“ Where am I ? ” came the response in a small, clear, sad, high, little voice.

“ We are Uncle Benedict’s nephew and niece,” said Nino trembling.

“ I see, you are the children for whom the captain bought me of the Arabian in Algiers. And we are in Italy now ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ That makes me happy. What city in Italy ? ”

“ In Florence.”

“ I’m glad of that.”

“ What is your name ? ” whispered Lena timidly.

“ Tamburino.”

“ Uncle wrote us that you had traveled a great deal and would tell us all your adventures,” said Lena.

The Little Lead Soldier

"My, my, what a hurry you're in. Let me rest a while. I have been shut up in a box for many days and can't talk yet," said Tamburino, turning away his head.

"Of course," said Nino solemnly; "pay no attention to her; she is a woman, and all women are curious."

"But they are not stupid," replied Lena angrily, and left the room.

"Too bad, too bad; if you have to quarrel I shall be as mute as a fish. Go and call your sister back and make up with her. Your uncle told me not to tell you a thing unless you were good."

"But Lena is very curious and bossy."

"Well, didn't you begin it? You are as curious as she is, and you are older and ought to be more reasonable."

Lena was already sorry that she had gone away, for fear she might lose some of the first beautiful stories; she slowly came back and put her pretty face, framed in yellow curls, between the folding doors.

"Nino," she said softly.

"Come in and don't be foolish. Shut the door—it's cold here," answered Nino. And peace was made.

Tamburino's First Adventure

"Let me rest till evening," said Tamburino, "then if you promise not to quarrel I'll tell you a story."

"Where should you like to stay?" asked Lena.

"In my little box."

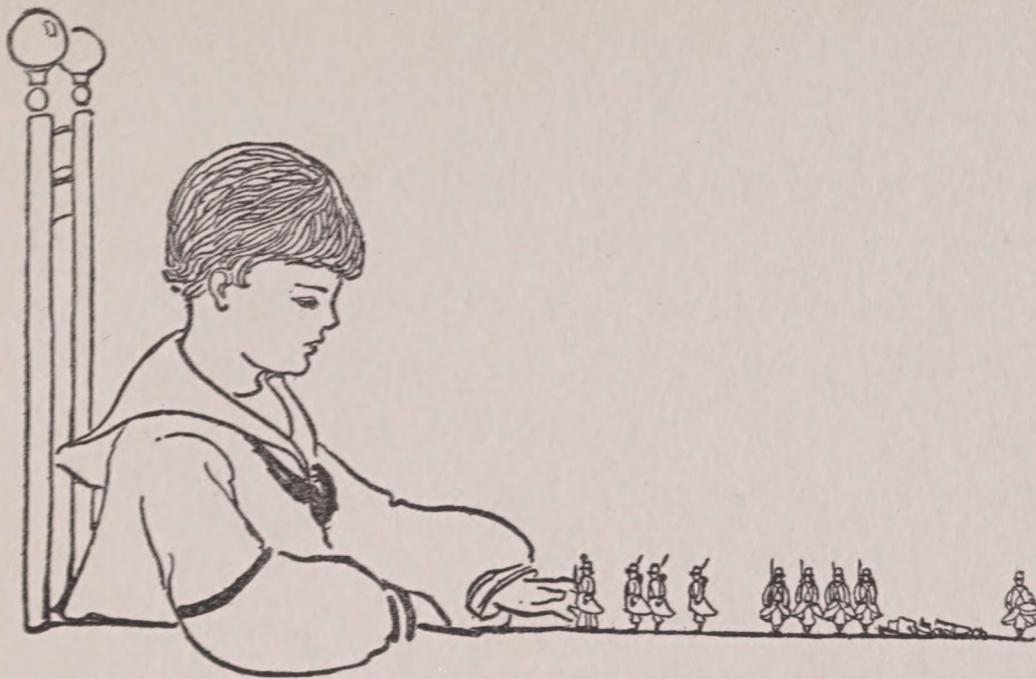
"I'll find you a prettier one; leave it to me."

Then they hunted about, but could find nothing suitable. Finally their mother gave them a deep Japanese box in which they put a layer of fluffy cotton. On this they carefully laid the little soldier, and tiptoed away whispering, all excitement over what they should hear later.

After dinner that evening, following a day of their very best behavior, they got permission to take the little fellow to the dining-room. They took him out of the Japanese box, and he at once bowed, and began his story.



III. Tamburino's Birth and First Friends



CHAPTER III

TAMBURINO'S BIRTH AND FIRST FRIENDS

I WAS born in Paris in a large factory, and was made to order for a young woman who wanted to give me as a present to her little boy. I wasn't born alone. There were a dozen like me, different from ordinary lead soldiers and all run in the same mould. The lady paid a high price for us, and was very much pleased with us, and indeed our father, the manufacturer, had used all his skill in making us. He used sheets of extra fine lead and colored us with the best paint, he made us strong enough to stand all the hard

The Little Lead Soldier

knocks of life, and gave us all the gift of memory. He was so careful of us that he made a beautiful long box to put us in. It was inlaid with mother of pearl, and had little compartments lined with satin. Then he packed us and laid us delicately in our little house, wrapped it up and sent us to the lady. She was as happy as she could be and gave us to her son, a bright little boy about ten years old.

You cannot imagine the joy of Renato, as the little fellow was called, in getting such a present from his mother. He took us out one by one, arranged us in line, made us go through the military tactics, and after playing with us an hour put us away to rest.

It was a jolly life, and all my brothers, including the captain and the lieutenant, were very contented. I was happy and comfortable and soon got acquainted with all the family. These were the Signora Margherita, the mother of Renato, Signor Filippo, his father, and Gian Pietro, Renato's uncle, a most original character. He never did a thing and had never done a thing all his life. Every day he read the newspaper, took a walk very slowly, ate his dinner, took a nap, had a drink, and went to bed.

Tamburino's Birth and First Friends

He had no business, he didn't care for science or art or politics, and when his brother's friends discussed books and pictures and public affairs he shook his head as though he pitied all such people.

"Why do you get so excited?" he would ask.

"If every one acted as you do, dear Gian Pietro, the world would be very badly off," some one would answer.

"And do all your discussions make it so much better?"

"Yes; without such things it would be very much worse."

"What does it matter whether this man is elected or that? What difference does it make if a book is well written or badly written? Don't read it and it won't trouble you. Why do you care if a picture is beautiful or ugly, or if it was painted by Raphael or Titian. Don't look at it, and you won't have to discuss it."

"It would be impossible for me to live as you do," said Signor Filippo.

"But I am very happy this way."

"I need to work."

"Need to? No, you like it. Work isn't a neces-

The Little Lead Soldier

sity, man wasn't born to work. Rather than work I'd — ”

“ You'd die of starvation.”

“ Who knows? I'd buy a penny's worth of bread and cheese and sit under a tree and eat and rest.”

Once this strange man went to visit some friends who lived in the country.

“ Good-bye, Filippo and Margherita,” he said on going to bed; “ to-morrow I'm going to the country.”

“ When shall you come back? ” asked his brother-in-law.

“ In the evening; how long did you think I'd stay? ”

“ Well, I only asked so that I could send some one to the station for you.”

“ Yes, yes, of course; I'll be back in the evening.”

But the evening passed, and the next day and day after day for five days.

Signor Filippo wrote and telegraphed to their friends, but not a word did he hear. When Gian Pietro finally came his brother said: “ You made us very anxious.”

“ And why? ” asked Gian Pietro.

Tamburino's Birth and First Friends

"You said you would be back the next evening."

"So I did, but as I was enjoying myself I stayed."

Sometimes he preached his theory of laziness to Renato, when he was studying his lessons.

"Why do you study, child?" he would ask.

"Because I have to. It is my duty."

"Why duty?" he lazily questioned. "Rest would be better for your health."

"Papa and Mama tell me that ignorant men are ruled by every one."

"Don't listen to what they say, boy. What use shall you make of your learning?"

"I'm going to get a position."

"You will not get it for love."

"I will be a doctor."

"So as to kill people?"

"A lawyer then."

"To send people to prison?"

"Maybe I'll be a professor."

"So as to make other boys unhappy?"

"I might write and be a journalist or a poet; or I might be an architect or a painter."

"All these things just worry you and shorten your

The Little Lead Soldier

life. Take care of your health—that is the necessary thing, but of what use is work?"

"Do keep quiet," interrupted Signora Margherita, half laughing, half angry; "you'll spoil the boy."

"All right; you want him to work, and think you'll make something good out of him."

Then he played a while with us soldiers and after that he went to bed, saying in a tired, sleepy voice, "Well, I'll let the poor little soldiers rest." I laughed to myself. This useless man who thought everything else useless amused me immensely, and when serious discussions were going on his face alone was a pleasure to see.

I lived many years in this family. The boy became a fine, courageous man and Uncle Gian Pietro grew more and more lazy. Signora Margherita was very delicate and her husband was always anxious about her. One winter she was taken with a fever and in two weeks she died.

Renato's grief was indescribable. His father could do nothing with him. Even Gian Pietro was moved by the loss of this dear lady.

Naturally Renato played no more with us. We

Tamburino's Birth and First Friends

were one of the memories of his childhood. But once in a while he would look at us and talk to us, and when his mother died he laid us out on the table and cried as he remembered the way he used to kiss her when she would let him play with us as a reward for extra goodness.

One day I remember particularly, because it was the first real trial of my life. I was separated from my brothers. Renato wished to give a present to one of his little cousins, and knowing how much he admired us he thought he would give us to him. Then remembering how much his mother liked us, at the last moment he decided to keep one in memory of her. The good fortune was mine, and I remained with him. I say good fortune, for the new owner maltreated my poor brothers, and they all disappeared in a short time. I was placed in Renato's desk, where I could watch all his joys and sorrows. How many secrets I heard—how much about his plans and disappointments!

He had become a handsome man, tall, with brown curls about his forehead, and a grave face that showed the goodness of his soul. His one dream was to become illustrious, to do something great that would

The Little Lead Soldier

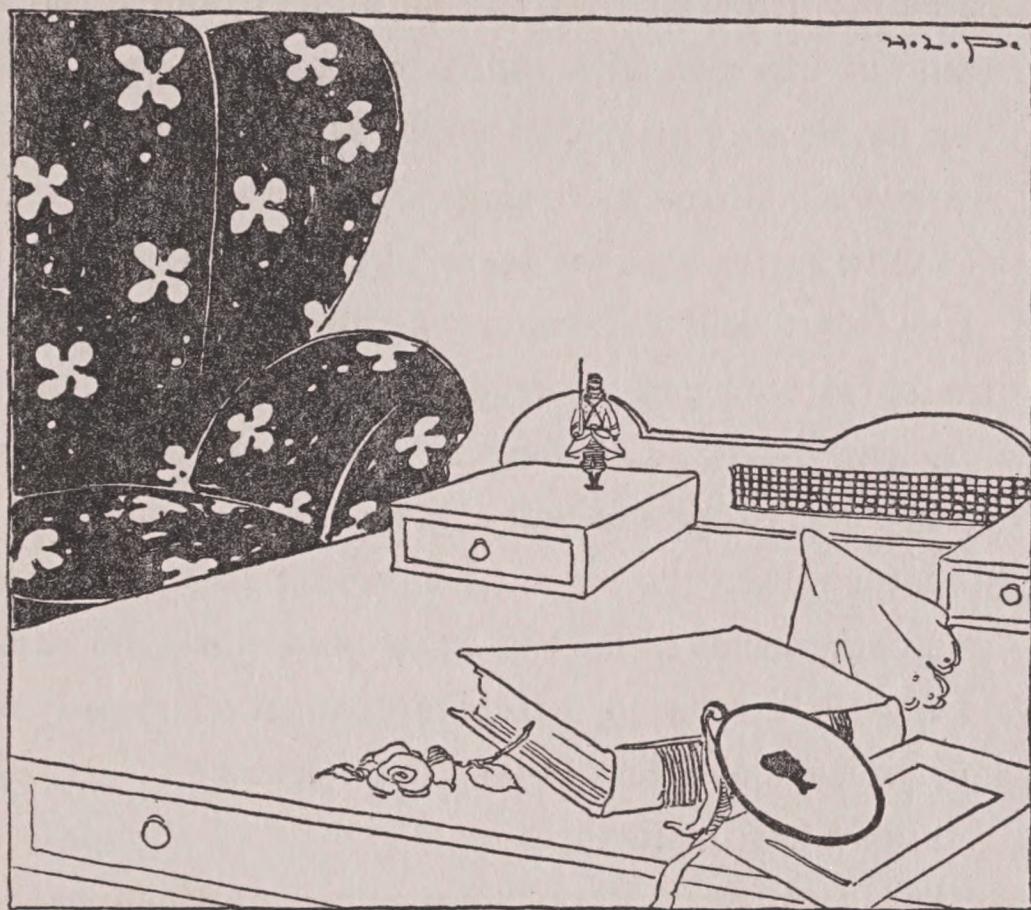
carry his name all over the world, for so he hoped to gain the affection of a young girl that he loved. For her he wrote verses; for her he studied; for her he worked sometimes all through the night.

"How can a man be born to live such a life?" his uncle often said to him, but he only smiled and continued to work and to dream.

One day the girl left for a far country. Renato tried in vain to get news of her, and concluded that she had forgotten him. So, without listening to the prayers and remonstrances of his father and uncle, he came to a serious decision. He heard about a company of men starting off to discover the North Pole. He determined to go with them.

The days before he started were terrible. Farewells, preparations, prayers—all were sad. Everything brought tears to the eyes of Signor Filippo, and Uncle Gian Pietro was more agitated than he had ever been in his life before. The day before he left Renato packed into a suit case all the little things that reminded him of the people he loved. A miniature of his mother; a silver thimble with which she had sewed up to the last days of her life; pictures of his

Tamburino's Birth and First Friends



father and his uncle; some books, one of which was that from which his mother taught him to read; a dried red rose and a little lace handkerchief. Then as he was about to close the box he saw me.

“Oh, my beautiful little soldier,” he said, “what hours of happiness I have passed with you! you shall go with me; you shall follow me through the snows and I’ll keep you warm in your little bed,” and so it

The Little Lead Soldier

happened. I was put in a box for a house, and I went into the bag with the other precious objects. He loved to talk to me as he would to a person, and go over with me all the sad and happy doings of his past; and so it happened that I was often taken from my box and thrust into Renato's pocket. In the hotels I was on the table among his papers. On the ship I was either with him or in his cabin. I became his nearest and his dearest possession. He never imagined how grateful I was.

It was then that I began to teach myself to listen and to talk. I learned to discuss and observe, to make comparisons, and form my own opinions.

We traveled without stopping through Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden. Signor Filippo went with us to Stockholm. Then he left us, as he could not bear to see his son start on his dangerous expedition. It was here that we joined the other travelers about to start on the long hard voyage. They were a Dutchman, an Englishman, and an Italian.

We crossed the Baltic Sea and went by land to the extreme boundary of Norway, when we boarded the ship that was to take us to the Pole.

Tamburino's Birth and First Friends

I remember nothing in particular of this first journey. I was made stupid by my discomfort and longed for the big dining-room of our house in Paris. I was not yet accustomed to the inconveniences of travel, but soon I had to adapt myself to much worse things.

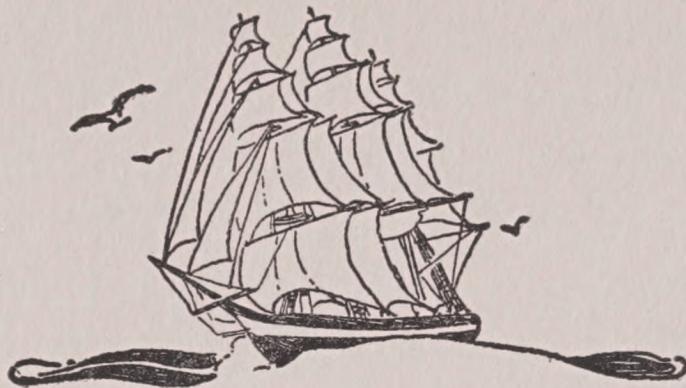
And now, children, we must go to bed. To-morrow I will begin to tell you about my serious adventures. Good-night.

* * * * *

Nino and Lena laid the little soldier away and went to bed with their heads full of ideas and longing for the next evening, when they were to hear more. They were so excited their mother was afraid they wouldn't be able to sleep.



IV. At the North Pole



CHAPTER IV

AT THE NORTH POLE

AFTER supper the next day they brought out the little lead soldier, and begged him to go on with his story.

The ship on which we sailed—said Tamburino—carried everything necessary for the long season in that unknown part of the world where it is always dark and cold, for you know way up there in the north there are months at a time when the sun doesn't shine.

I soon learned to know all the companions of my friend. These were a shy, quiet Englishman, Lord Midling; an ordinary Hollander, Van Ryck, so precise

The Little Lead Soldier

I had no patience with him ; and an Italian, Lorenzo Ranaini, who was quite crazy ; there is no other word to describe him.

No sooner had he seen me than he was determined to get possession of me, and my master had a great time holding on to me.

Ranaini made a lot of noise and invented a thousand games in which I took part. He built a little theatre for marionettes, and gave plays in which I always played the principal rôles.

Every day he invented some new trick and once, after we had started, when we were sailing amidst great masses of ice, he got the cook to put me inside of an enormous cake.

Can you imagine it? I can never tell you what I suffered. But the worst of all was the fright of my master, who thought he had lost his mascot.

There was a great dinner on board and I, tucked away in my prison, could overhear poor Renato's sighs over my disappearance.

“ You have hidden him,” he said to Lorenzo.

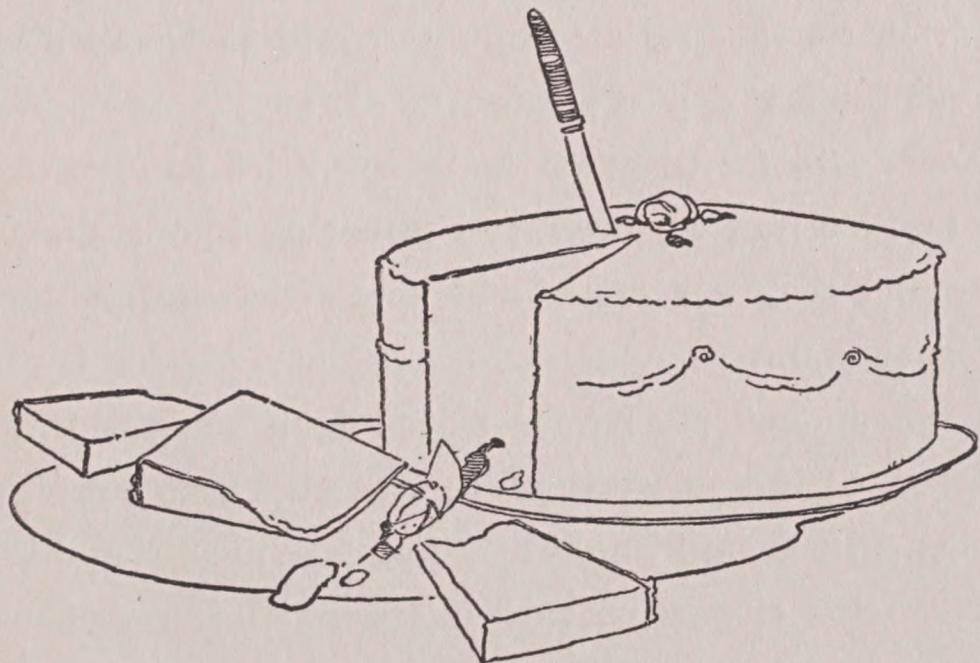
“ No, I assure you,” laughed Lorenzo.

“ Then it is you who are playing a trick on me,” he

At the North Pole

charged Van Ryck. And the stolid, careful Dutchman answered : "This would not have happened if you had kept your things in order."

Renato gave them no peace until they had all promised to help him search for me. At the end of the dinner the famous cake was served, with me in the middle of it. When I fell out they all cheered and



Renato shouted with joy. He gave me a bath and put me in the pocket of his fur coat. I went to sleep there amidst the sound of glasses clinking, Lorenzo laughing, and a mouth-organ wonderfully played by Lord

The Little Lead Soldier

Midling. It was the last happy day free from worry that was passed by the four good friends. After this every one waited intently for the orders of the captain. He was always making observations. The dinners were all serious, without toasts, and there was no conversation but scientific discussions, of which I understood very little.

Once or twice a week Lorenzo borrowed me for his marionette theatre. He would give plays preceded by organ solos with part of the crew for audience and Van Ryck as director.

I was full of curiosity, and whenever I got a chance I would look out of the window to make out in what strange country we might be, but I never succeeded in seeing much. My master passed long hours on the bridge, when he would talk to me as if I were a person.

At such times I would look out over the sea, and the mountains of floating ice filled me with indescribable terror.

We could always see the sun, but never felt warm. It seemed as if we were in a country of bad fairies.

One day the watchman called, "Land."

"Land, Land," was shouted on every side.

At the North Pole

"It is a bank of ice," said some one.

"It is an iceberg."

"No," said the sailor. "I saw an animal on the top of the mountain. It must have been a bear."

"A queer bear—he had horns longer than a deer."

"A reindeer then."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Lorenzo. "Wouldn't a little fresh meat taste good?"

In less time than it takes to tell it the command was given to stop and every one was ready for a hunt. The ship was stopped at an island, if one could call it that, a forgotten little rock in the midst of that sea of ice where the rays of the sun had melted some of the layers of ice and allowed a few plants to grow.

Scarcely had their feet touched land when savage yells came from the men who found themselves close to the reindeer.

I was anxious to see this animal, of which I had heard the men talk so much, for I had learned that it was very useful to these people of the far north. The Laplanders use it for food as we do sheep and oxen, and instead of using horses they make the reindeer draw their sledges. The Greenlanders use its skin

The Little Lead Soldier

for clothes, and the tendons they make into strong thread. Out of the horns of the old animals they carve cooking utensils, and from part of the young ones they make gelatine. Nor is this all; for I had heard that they mixed the food found in the stomachs with chopped meat and blood and fat and so made a kind of cake they were very fond of.

The deer was frightened at the shouting and fled, turning to the right. Two sailors followed it, while my master and the Englishman ran to the left to head him off in that direction.

"I say—it is a superb animal," said Lorenzo, who was a passionate hunter. "We mustn't let it escape. It must be a female."

"No," said Lord Midling, "don't you see its great horns? The female's horns fall quickly and are much smaller."

"Look then!"

"Quick!"

The reindeer ran to the north, and at that instant a drove of these useful and beautiful animals appeared at the foot of the rock. Renato and the Dutchman crept toward them on their stomachs, dragging themselves

At the North Pole

along on the ice close to the shore until they came to a stream of melting ice, on the edge of which the reindeer were feeding. My master was very wet and kept sinking in the mud. I was afraid I should lose sight of him, and I trembled as I watched the hunt because the travelers were so excited.

At last the reindeer were within range of their rifles. Four shots brought down two of the most beautiful animals, who were then taken to the ship with a great deal of trouble. But they made the most delicious dinner, at least so I judged from the joy of the diners.

We sailed past the island toward the north. Autumn was coming. We saw less and less of the sun, and were absolutely surrounded by ice.

I will not try to describe to you the long monotonous days passed indoors. The travelers all seemed depressed. The captain was always busy. I could see he was making preparations for winter. I was sad because I could see that my master was. Lorenzo still made absurd speeches and gave plays with his marionettes. But no one listened. Pulcinello and Columbia beat me on the head whenever they could, but they

The Little Lead Soldier

couldn't make Renato laugh any more. He read scientific books and watched the polar nights.

I wish I could describe them to you. There is a far-off light with soft tones melting into thin air. You can't tell where one color begins and another ends. Everything is seen in a light like twilight, no forms—just phantoms. The plains of ice are dark blue with suggestions of daylight. The color of the sky is violet, dark blue at the top shading to green; and all the colors are reflected on the surface of the ice. If you look toward the South you can see a great red moon with a yellow aureole which disappears behind light clouds and shines through them, making them like a golden, translucent veil.

On the twenty-eighth of October the moon shone all night, while the reflection of the sun's rays tinged the ice with rose color. Sometimes it seemed as if two, sometimes as if three great moons moved over the sky. Lorenzo never ceased exclaiming and wondering, and Lord Midling amused himself by refusing to explain things to him.

"Two moons," said Lorenzo; "where can we be? Perhaps we have changed planets."

At the North Pole

“Surely,” said Lord Midling.

“Why don’t you explain it to me?”

“Explanations are forbidden. You ought to study for yourself.”

Lorenzo would grow furious, and I too wished to know. Poor little nobody—to whom a manufacturer had in some strange way given the power of understanding.

At last Van Ryck tried to explain in rather poor Italian that what we saw was due to refraction of light on infinitesimal needles of ice that floated in the atmosphere.

It lasted a whole night, and is one of the most superb sights of the polar region. It is known as the aurora borealis. It was a festival of light. There were long streamers shaped like burning serpents thrown from a wheel. A soft light in the horizon spread little by little until it was a great yellow arch, and immense numbers of various colored bright rays shot out of it in every direction. Here and there flashes like lightning darted up, then vivid, luminous waves would form and revolve in spirals of splendid red and pale emerald. Then it would fade to reappear suddenly.

The Little Lead Soldier

"How marvelous!" exclaimed Nino and Lena in one breath. "How I should like to see an aurora borealis," said Lena. "And I, too," added Nino. "When I'm grown up I'll go to the Pole."

I saw many of them during that long winter while we were buried in the ice waiting for the sun to come again so we could get further north.

Nothing happened during those long months. Some bear hunts and some trips with the dogs, who drew the sledges over the ice.

But one day (and here begins a truly terrible story), a day in the month of March, a sailor said he had seen the traces of a bear near us.

In a flash every one was again ready for a hunt. Ten sailors only were left on board. The others followed the travelers, and they were led by Captain John, who was used to hunting in Siberia.

In the strange twilight the hunters crept slowly forward, and I tried to see all I could from the little pocket of Renato's waistcoat.

Some of the hunters followed the tracks of the animals and others took their places behind a great rock. At last right in front of them an enormous bear ap-

At the North Pole

peared coming out of a hole in a cliff. I had never seen anything more frightful. This huge animal was prepared to face any danger in the hope of finding something that would satisfy his hunger.

Four shots were fired in vain. The bear came nearer. Some of the guns wouldn't go off, perhaps because it was so cold, or for some reason I can't explain. I only know that the hunters stood there unprotected. The men on the other side of the rock couldn't help, as there was no way for them to know that their friends were in any danger from the wild beast. At last Renato and Lord Midling advanced and fired their guns when within a few feet of the bear. One shot entered his shoulder. He fell with a terrible howl then, infuriated by the pain, he rose and dashed on Renato. The poor fellow did not have time to draw his knife from his belt. The bear's fangs entered his right arm and the force of the contact threw him on the ice. Imagine my horror; it makes me shudder even now. The blood dripped from the wounds in his face and chest. His friends ran to help him and Lord Midling finished the bear with two shots. The bear made no defense, but in his dying convulsions one claw caught

The Little Lead Soldier

the breast of my master and tore the pocket of the waistcoat where I was hidden—so that I fell out on the ice.

And there I lay lost forever without help and without hope.

* * * * *

Nino and Lena did not dare ask the little soldier to tell them any more that evening. They waited for the next day with some anxiety hoping that by that time he would have overcome some of the sadness aroused by his memories.



V. A New Master

CHAPTER V

A NEW MASTER

THE next morning Tamburino began his story again.

What tortures I endured on seeing my master carried away by Lord Midling and Lorenzo cannot even be imagined. I thought he was dead, for I never saw him again. I lay still on the ice where I thought Renato had been murdered and I couldn't move. I bitterly blamed the old Parisian toy maker who had made me able to see and understand and yet hadn't given me power to walk.

I knew nothing of the ship. I saw for a time two old dogs around the body of the bear, but they soon disappeared.

The time passed slowly. The sun was in the heavens all day and it was always light. How sad is that midnight sun. Sad as the day is, the night is worse.

As I lay there I used to think about the beautiful

The Little Lead Soldier

evenings in Renato's home when he was little, the long years when he played with me on the big dining table while his Uncle Gian Pietro sat by with his lazy talk.

After a time things about me began to change, and everywhere there was noise, sometimes dull, sometimes loud and from a great distance, the noise of water. This was dreadful and lasted a long time; but I don't know how many days, as the sun never set.

At last quite suddenly I found myself in an ocean full of ice, mountains moving rapidly with the noisy water, which was a dirty, dull green seen by the light of the polar sun. I was on an iceberg, and the body of the bear was still near me as we traveled toward unknown lands, and often I saw flights of large birds that looked like penguins, then flocks of geese and sea-gulls: so I knew we were near land. But who could take me to safety?

At length my ice bank drifted close to land, it coasted along some little islands, and finally stopped in a bay of a large island which I afterward found was Spitzbergen.

Beside me were high mountains very different from



IN AN OCEAN FULL OF ICE

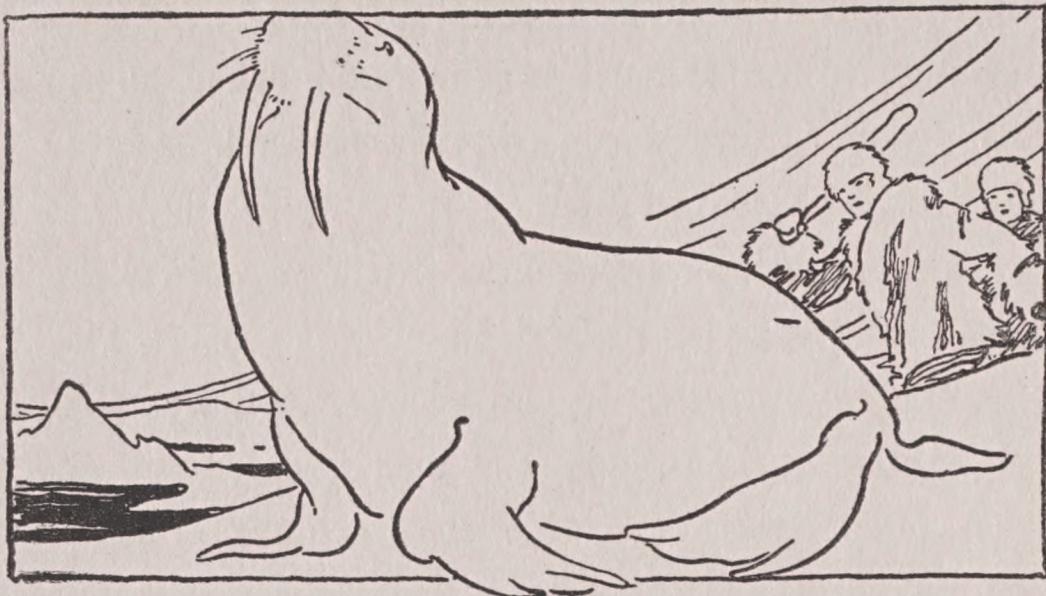
A New Master

ours. They seemed to be of granite, strangely cut with columns, arranged in terraces above each other. They stood guarding the coast, and the ocean seemed to moan as it beat against them.

I had no hope of being able to get near the shore, where I could see some huts, something at least which showed the presence of human beings, when a strange thing happened which was the beginning of new adventures.

Up on my bank of ice came some walruses to rest. You know, or if you do not I will tell you, that this is an animal which lives partly on land and partly in the water, and it is very highly prized. This may be because of the oil which exudes from its body, or on account of its large tusks which are of ivory, harder and whiter than those of the elephant. The walruses arranged themselves and left one as a sentinel to watch for danger. This is one of their customs. But this time the sentinel failed to see what was happening. Two large boats approached full of men to try and capture the animals. The men got out of the first boat, and one man threw an iron hook which caught the sentinel walrus. Then the men from the other

The Little Lead Soldier



boat joined in and struck at the largest of the animals. There was the wildest confusion. Some of the animals fled into the sea and others turned ferociously, prepared for a desperate defense.

I shall not bore you with another description of a fight, I shall only say that two of the best animals were killed and taken to the boats.

Then I saw that two of the sailors had noticed the stain of the bear's blood on the snow, and they came close to the place where I lay near the body of the bear. One was a handsome, strong man with a black beard, the other was a delicate, young man. Both were dressed in fur. For a moment I thought they

A New Master

might be Esquimaux. I did not know where I was, and thought I might be near Greenland, but judging by the way they were dressed and the way they talked I soon saw I was mistaken.

"Look, Ivan," said the older, "this is a bear killed by the hand of a man."

"Certainly," answered the other, "you are right. See, Captain Kykare, here are shots."

"Sure enough. Ivan, this iceberg comes from polar seas. This bear was surely killed by last year's explorers."

"Who knows?"

"We may find something else, some weapon, perhaps."

"Hello, Captain, look here."

"Great Scott, a soldier of the French army! That is, of the children's army."

"What shall we do with it, Captain?"

"Do you wish to play with it?"

"Hardly, Captain, but if you will give it to me I will give it to Maud's little brother. They are children of a maker of cod-liver oil who lives at Reykjavik in Iceland."

The Little Lead Soldier

"Ah, I see, old fellow; you want to please the family of your sweetheart."

"No; but they were good to me when I first came to Iceland for fish. I wish to please them for no other reason."

"All right, my boy, it makes no difference to me; take it and be happy."

So here I found a new friend and a new master. Behold me this time in the pocket of a cod fisher, stationed on the coast of Spitzbergen.

Ivan put me into good condition again and called on everybody to admire me. On all sides I was greeted by exclamations and for the three days the sailors remained at Spitzbergen I was their constant plaything. Like Renato Ivan never left me. I went with him when he hunted reindeer or when he searched for scurvy grass: this is the name given to a kind of sea cabbage which the sailors think cures scurvy, a disease common among those living on salt meat.

One evening as Ivan and Captain Kykare were eating their supper of salt fish and biscuit Ivan asked: "Tell me, Captain, you have been in this island so often—did you ever meet the wild man of the snow?"

A New Master

“ Not I, but my father did.”

“ Then he is not a fable ? ”

“ No, indeed, he was a Russian ; his name was Sarakoff.”

“ And why was he here all alone ? ”

“ I know nothing about that, but he was here.”

“ He was a convict escaped from Siberia in a whaling ship,” said another sailor.

“ But how did he live here ? ”

“ By fishing ; he built himself a hut.”

“ And is this it ? ”

“ It looks like it,” answered the captain. “ When I was a youngster I remember seeing shells and parts of trees carried to the shore on warm currents that flowed through the sea of ice, and I heard that Sarakoff collected them.”

“ Santa Maria ! How many years did he live here alone ? ”

“ Twenty-three, my boy.”

“ God help us.”

“ Ah ! ” said the captain, “ that prayer makes me feel certain that you are thinking of your Maud.”

“ Don’t joke, Captain ; I really wish to please the

The Little Lead Soldier

little boy. If you only knew—he looks like my little brother, a little brother who was lost in the sea. I'll tell you, Captain. We went to the shore fishing for shrimps, and my mother had forbidden me to take him with me. I did not listen; it seemed to me so safe and he was strong. I left him a moment, telling him not to move while I went after a shrimp. I told him to hold fast to a rock until I came back. But he left it and walked into a deep hole. When I came back he was nowhere to be seen, and pretty soon I saw his little body floating a minute, then I saw it no more."

Ivan choked, and the captain made the sign of the cross.

"And your mother?" asked the captain.

"She is dead, too, Captain. I am alone, alone. I live only with the fish. I often think I would like to change seas. I am tired of ice and of this pale sun that always shines but never warms us. But what can I do? I love Maud's little brother, and it is a great day when I get back to the fishing station where he is."

"You're a fine boy; when you decide to change seas

A New Master

I'll introduce you to the captain of a boat on the Pacific."

"Thank you, Captain, but I won't go so long as little Rink lives."



VI. The Dangers of Iceland

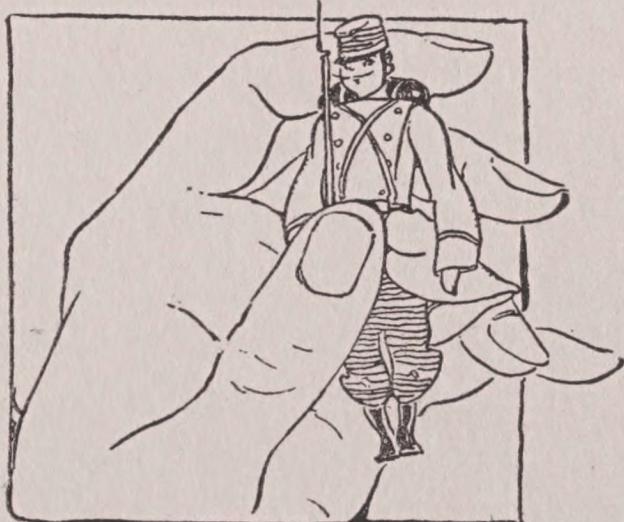
CHAPTER VI

THE DANGERS OF ICELAND

CAPTAIN KYKARE landed at the village of Reykjavik. The fishing was over, and as they had stayed longer than usual this year trying for the walruses the captain was anxious to get away, so Ivan had only a few days in which to visit the oil maker's family.

He started out walking very quickly on account of the present he was taking to Rink. Sometimes he held me in his hand, as I lay in his pocket, and all the time he talked to me.

"Dear little fellow—my good Tam-burino—don't you like this beautiful country? You will be happy in Rink's little house. It smells of



The Little Lead Soldier

fish and oil, but what does that matter? Every one here makes cod-liver oil. You will see Rink is good. Then it is fine, this country—not, of course, like France, our France." He was quiet a little while, then went on, "Do you see those great columns of granite? It seems as though we were in the country of giants, doesn't it, Tamburino? Look up at the terraces and pillars; doesn't it look like a giant's palace? Then these rocks are useful. Scientists come here for spar, a kind of mineral they use in their experiments in their laboratories. You didn't know all this, did you, Tamburino? Then Iceland has quantities of sulphur. If there were no more sulphur in all the world Iceland could furnish enough for every one. Do you see that river at the right? They call it Fuli Löhr (the river of bad odors) because it has sulphur in it. Here, too, they have lava, and mineral waters. Do I amuse you, Tamburino?"

If he could have known that I heard him!

We crossed a great plain that looked as if it were sprinkled with drops of water.

"Take care, here, Tamburino, this water might melt you, for it is hot," continued Ivan. "It is from a

The Dangers of Iceland

geyser, and is boiling, my dear. Did you know that these geysers spout up in the air as high as forty yards and that the water weighs sixty tons? This place is dangerous, you know. Sometimes the earth is so thin it won't bear the weight of a man, and we must go round back of the rocks."

But he walked along happily, growing gayer as he came near Rink's home.

The smell now was absolutely dreadful, and the idea of living all my life in such a cold country made me desperate. I longed to ask Ivan never to leave me. I was afraid this would be my last dwelling place.

Ivan knocked at the door of a little low house and waited a few minutes. Then a young girl appeared. She was small and short, with a grave face as cold as the land in which she lived. She took Ivan's hand and broke into tears.

"Why, Maud," he said, "what is the matter?"

"Alas, sad news, Ivan."

"Rink?"

"He is dead.

Ivan leaned against the door.

The Little Lead Soldier

"Rink," he said, "my dear little brother."

"You know the beautiful frozen lake where thousands of fish live under the ice? Well, one day Father took him to fish with him. They made holes in the ice and let down the hooks and caught the fish and Rink was much amused. But Father lost sight of him a moment and he disappeared in the treacherous lake."

Ivan sobbed. "I must go, Maud, I cannot come back. I loved him too much, my little Rink."

And indeed he never did go back. To tell the truth, children, I loved this good, simple sailor so much that it made me unhappy to see him so sad, but I was not sorry that I was going to stay with him.

We went on board the vessel sooner than the time appointed and the captain saw at once that something had happened.

"Captain Kykare, I want to go to another sea."

"Have you quarreled with your sweetheart?"

"No, Captain, but you promised to help me when I wanted to change."

"Yes, I promised you."

* * * * *

The Dangers of Iceland

The sailors talked of nothing but the voyage and Brittany. It was very hard for Ivan, but as for me, children, I was all gayety. The further south we sailed the more I felt as though I were made new again. Just think, to see my own country, France; even if it were only Brittany, and far from Paris, still it was France.

When we left the boat Ivan took the captain's hand.

"Next year, Captain, I shall not be with you. You remember?"

"Yes, I remember, my boy. When you are in Havre look up Captain Paziani; he is an Italian, and travels on the Pacific Ocean. Sometimes he goes to India. Give him this letter, and God bless you."

"Thank you, Captain. But shall we not see each other again?"

"Who knows whether I shall come again to France? I should like to stay in the north. Perhaps you, too, have made a mistake to leave the fishing."

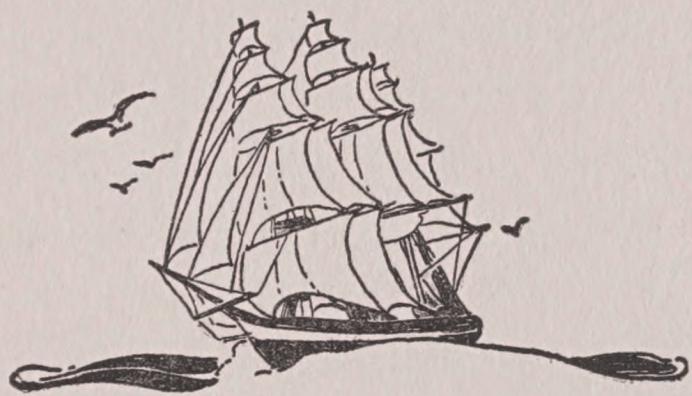
"I need the sun. In the north I always feel frozen to my very soul."

The Little Lead Soldier

“ Tell me, boy, about that famous deserter. Was he swallowed by a whale ? ”

“ No, Captain, I have him with me to remind me of Rink.”

And so they separated.



VII. From North to South

CHAPTER VII

FROM NORTH TO SOUTH

IVAN was truly a great, big boy. For a few months he lived on the Breton coast in the cabin of an uncle for whom he was very thoughtful and to whom he paid much attention. He had no friends ; he never went to the inn ; he was always quiet and read a great deal. He was the sort of person who seemed made to be sad and on whom only serious events made a deep impression. But he spent very little time in the cabin, and one day he did up his bundle and prepared to start for Havre. He had never shown me to any one, not even to his uncle, but kept me all to himself and even wore me like a watch tied to a ribbon.

Little by little I was forgotten. Everything in this world changes and passes. But what could I expect ? I took interest in my long voyages. The many turns of fortune had made me used to travelers' adventures. I smiled when I thought of seeing new faces, the new costumes of unfamiliar countries, the clothes, the food, even the religions were all so different.

The Little Lead Soldier

Ivan found no difficulty in getting on Captain Paziani's ship, and we set sail with the first spring winds. The voyage was to be very long. We were to carry goods to all the large ports of Asia until we came to the islands of the Pacific. The captain would buy gum in Arabia, pearls in India, tea in Ceylon, rice in China and bric-à-brac in Japan. He made arrangements to pick up his cargo on the return trip, and would keep on to the Society Islands, from which he would turn back toward home.

Ivan made friends with an old man who had spent his life traveling in these waters and who had promised to be his guide in all the cities where they should be permitted to land. He was a good old man, very brown from the sun, and he spoke an unintelligible language made up of Genoese dialect, bad French and a mixture of all the languages spoken in the countries at whose coasts they stopped.

"You shall see, you shall see," he said to Ivan. "I will amuse you. You will meet many pleasant people. I know people in Pekin, in Japan, in the islands. You shall see. I will take you to theatres and balls; I will introduce you to the rulers of courts."

From North to South

"But what are you talking about, Gaspero?"

"Yes, dear, yes. You shall meet Paofei and his daughters; they are flowers, those girls, they ——"

The ship anchored at Papeete on a beautiful afternoon toward the end of summer.

Multitudes of small boats swarmed about our ship, the owners trying to scramble on deck with baskets full of oranges and bananas. But Ivan was so anxious to go ashore that he wouldn't give Gaspero time to buy anything. He had become so accustomed to the dreariness of everything in the north that he was crazy with delight to see the trees and plants glistening under the tropical sun, and fairly wanted to embrace them all. Along the shore were many wooden buildings among which grew two very tall trees. These were known as bread trees, and gave not only delicious shade but they also bore a fruit which the natives cut in slices and roasted on red-hot stones. This tree is now well known in Europe. There were also large shops, many of them kept by Chinese, and there were also great coffee and cocoa plantations.

Gaspero never let Ivan rest. He told him over and over again all he would show him of the natural

The Little Lead Soldier

beauties of the island and the customs of the country, so new to those just coming from a land of snow. And the first thing while Ivan rested he would take him to see Paofei, a rich Taitian. You see, children, I give you my impressions just as I remember them. Perhaps things seemed more beautiful to me by contrast to that sad north country, and especially did I feel the contrast in the sea. Here the sun shone gaily in the beautiful turquoise water, turning the foam to mother-of-pearl, touching a coral shore and making more vivid the forests of orange, banana, cocoa, and breadfruit trees. The whole city was a garden, with scattered wooden houses and large shady paths running off from the roads.

At the time Ivan and Gaspero landed the picturesque roads were thronged with people, all participating in the general gayety. Passing along the roads were many young girls with brown skins and black hair falling in long braids, and eyes that were deep set and sparkling. They were dressed in red, green, and blue tunics, fastened at the neck and falling straight down over the figure, their heads fascinatingly crowned with yellow flowers that brought out the tints of their hair

From North to South

and skin. Equally beautiful young men followed and joined them, and they laughed and joked together. They were dressed in a kind of cotton goods. An upper skirt looped up above the hips, leaving the legs free; over this was a shirt like those worn in Europe, which was left flowing loosely. Behind their ears they wore ornaments that Gaspero said were called "horo." Each was a stick seven to nine inches long. At one end of the stick were fastened the leaves of a mountain orchid, and at the other the corolla of a gardenia.

Gaspero told all this to Ivan, who was anxious to learn, and never stopped asking questions.

"It is curious; it seems as if at Papeete there is nothing but good humor everywhere."

"Don't admire that too much; it is a gayety that lasts the greater part of the night; but it is a misleading gayety."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It is the result of a wine they drink, made from oranges. Drinking this is strictly prohibited by the French government, under whose protection these islands are. But the natives make it secretly."

As they turned a corner they found their passage

The Little Lead Soldier

blocked, so they were obliged to turn off and go through a grove of palms in order to get back to the road.

“What is happening?” asked Ivan.

“A Taitian is moving. Here if one wishes to move he doesn’t change houses, but he moves his house from one place to another.”

“Ah, now you are fooling.”

“Stand still and see for yourself.”

“Sure enough, it is true. What a nonsensical idea.” For the first time in months Ivan laughed heartily.

Paofei’s house stood in the midst of a group of cocoa trees; all about were fountains and streams and beautiful flowers. Some children crowned with flowers were singing accompanied by a young man, and Paofei was sipping a drink brought to him by a young Frenchman who had recently come to the island and who was then present.

Gaspero and Ivan were heartily welcomed and were given bananas and a kind of sweet made of nuts and grated cocoa, also strange liqueurs.

After that there were dances in honor of the stran-

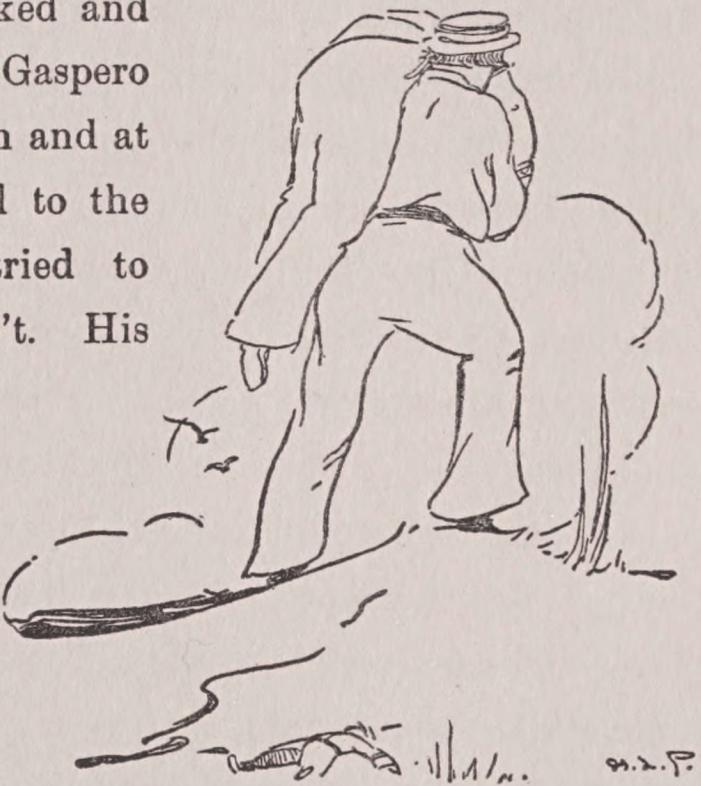
From North to South

gers. A young girl started rhythmically to the sound of a tambourine and a young man danced around her. When they were tired another couple took their place ; and so it was kept up to a late hour. When Ivan tried to rise he felt a strange weakness in his legs ; it seemed to him as if he were swaying about like the dancing girls. He had to take hold of Gaspero until the earth felt firm beneath his feet again.

There were many such festivities during the days they were on the island. The gayest of all was on the evening before they were to leave. It was at the house of a Frenchman who had lived there so long he was almost a Taitian. Gaspero was old and prudent and knew how to be moderate, but Ivan was young and had been a long time without any pleasures ; he had lived so much among icebergs and fisherman's ships and poor cabins on the coast of Brittany. When Gaspero begged him to come away he was obstinate and refused to go. Gaspero grew desperate. The boat was to sail at dawn, and it was so late at night they hardly had time to reach the shore where the boat waited for them, that was to take them out to the ship. Ivan sang so loud it seemed as though his throat would burst. At

The Little Lead Soldier

last Gaspero tried to take him away by force and, lifting him on his back, tried to carry him to the shore. A regular tussle resulted. Gaspero could hardly walk, as Ivan was no longer responsible for what he did, and kicked and tossed so that Gaspero couldn't hold him and at last let him fall to the ground. Ivan tried to rise, but couldn't. His knees shook, his head swam around horridly. He fell back on the ground and went to sleep. Then Gaspero lifted him again on his back and carried him.



But—but—my children, the poor little soldier was left behind in the grass—on the island of Taiti.

The ribbon that was tied to me was broken in the struggle, and as Gaspero lifted Ivan I fell out of his pocket to the ground.

From North to South

Again I had lost a beloved friend, and once more I found myself condemned to a frightful end without hope of finding any sort of life so much to my liking as my recent one had been. I had loved my wanderings, with the continual change of places and people. Now I had nothing more to hope for. From my heart I sent up a prayer to the beneficent fairies who befriend the wretched, to send me a liberator or at least to give me the ability to move myself. If I could only get my legs free from the iron rods that were put inside to hold them straight. Sometimes I thought I could feel a slight power in them, and I struggled with all my might to get out of the tuft of grass in which I lay. I had a vague hope, too, that Ivan might discover my loss, but if he should miss me it would be too late to do anything. Again I besought my good genius for the power to move, so as not to be condemned to stay forever on this island, so picturesque and beautiful to visit but tiresome to stay in always if one were used to a roving life.

What would I have done if I could have moved? Who knows? I didn't have an idea, but I felt certain that if I could move I would have enough ingenuity to

The Little Lead Soldier

devise some method of getting out of my trouble, and I felt I would dare to do anything to succeed.

I made all sorts of plans as to what I would do if my legs should begin to stir of themselves, and I tired myself out thinking that I had run miles and miles until I fell asleep, and had all sorts of visions such as I had never dreamed before.



VIII. At Queen Pomare's Court



CHAPTER VIII

AT QUEEN POMARE'S COURT

NOW it seemed that I was in a burning desert, where I was suffocated by the sand, and I could feel myself melting little by little. Then it seemed as though I were trampled under the hoofs of ferocious wild beasts; then suddenly I would see Renato again, but in a large house full of treasures, where there were crowds of gay children playing games and holding festivals. Then the scenes changed and became indefinite. And then, at last, I found I could move my legs and that I could walk.

The Little Lead Soldier

Just think how happy I was. I wish I could find words to tell you with what anxiety I tried to take my first step. My prayer had been answered. The good fairy had given me the gift of motion. Perhaps he had pitied my helplessness, and as he had given me intelligence he now wished me to be able to get about without some one to carry me.

Naturally it took a long time to get to the shore. I had hoped to find a way of reaching the ship before it sailed, but I was too late. I heard a sharp whistle, then a second one, and I saw the smoke, so I knew the ship had weighed anchor and sailed away.

It was useless to think of that any longer. What could I do next? Should I go back to the houses I had just left, enjoy the beauties of the island for a while and wait for a chance to go away?

My legs were very tired ; I had walked for hours in the opposite direction from the house of Paofei and, tired out, I lay down on the bank of a river in the shade of a breadfruit tree.

While I lay there I saw several negroes carrying baskets toward the port and returning for more baskets. I was so curious to find out where they went



I WAS TOO LATE

At Queen Pomare's Court

and what they carried that I followed them, but try as I might my steps would not keep up with theirs.

They stopped in front of the most beautiful house I had seen. It had a double row of columns in front, and European windows, and was in the midst of a large garden like a park with a fountain and every possible beauty.

I crept inside very cautiously through the principal door, found myself in a large room where lying on a mat was a lady, not very young, dressed like a European. She had a clear complexion and a kind, sympathetic face and beside her knelt a woman in the costume of the country who was showing her all sorts of objects that she took from an inlaid box—fans, various colored silk stuffs, porcelain vases, Chinese objects and many little things that ladies love to have on their tables.

“It is a beautiful gift that the good Princess Badoure has sent me.”

“Yes, your Majesty,” replied the younger lady.

Now I knew that I was at the court of Queen Pomare, although I wondered at the simplicity of the room and furniture, and I resolved to observe every-

The Little Lead Soldier

thing closely, hoping to overhear something that would help me to make a plan for getting away.

"I'm afraid we can't repay the munificence of the Chinese princess."

"The Princess Badoure knows very well that our manufacturers do not make such precious stuffs as the Chinese; we are thankful to the friendly princess, but"

"You have sent many baskets of fruit?"

"Yes, your Majesty, a ship passing by Papeete will stop here to leave a new French envoy, and will then return to China. We will ask the captain to carry our friendly offering to the beautiful Badoure."

The queen was satisfied with that, and went out rapidly and saw that the negroes were preparing baskets of fruits and aloes in a large hut standing at the right of the royal palace that served as a storehouse. They selected the best oranges and bananas and all the fruits the island produced and filled the baskets made of banana leaves interlaced with the leaves of other plants, arranging everything so that the air could circulate freely. When they had filled six baskets each with a few dozen bananas and a dozen or

At Queen Pomare's Court

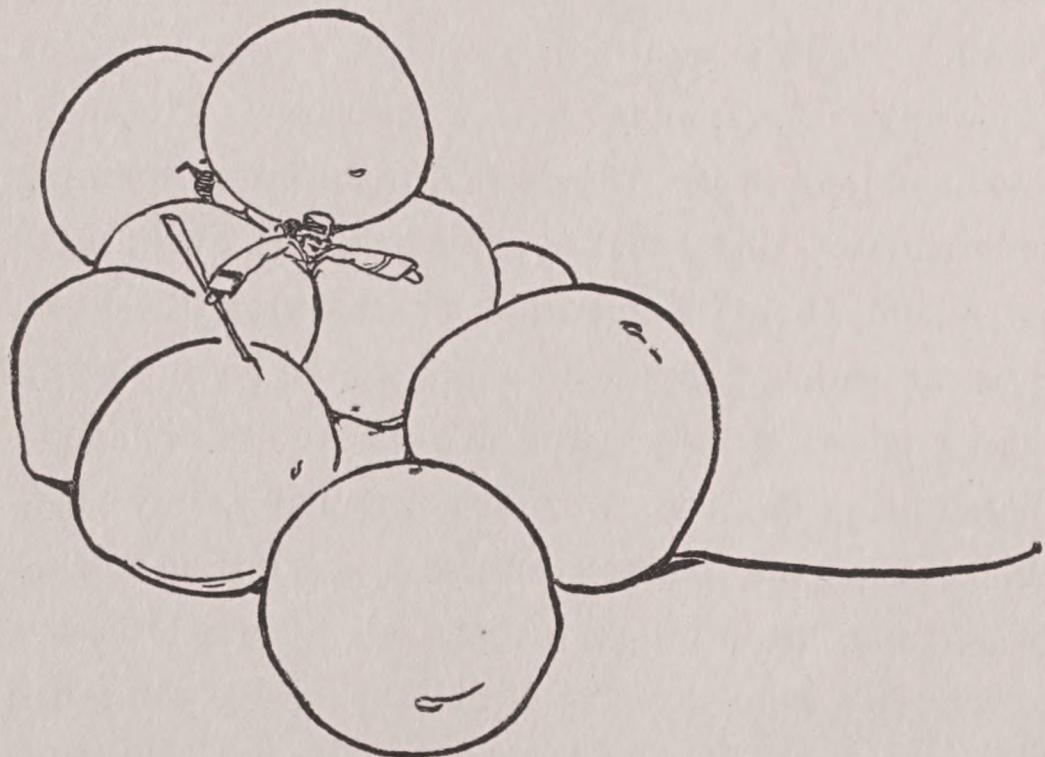
so of oranges they carried them to the port, and I concluded that if they could carry them so quickly the ship could not be far off and would be detained only a short time; and I was right. The sound of the firing of a cannon announced the signaling of the ship.

"I believe your Majesty wishes to send to the Chinese princess the large branch of coral and the pearl lately found in the shell. I must inform your Majesty that we must be prompt, so that I am starting at once with everything in the canoe to avoid making more than one trip."

I heard one of the negroes say this to Queen Pomare, and realized there was no time to lose. There were only twelve little baskets of oranges still to be carried. If I lost this opportunity I might not find another. I wished to get away at any cost; for I will not deny it, my children, I dreamed of returning to Europe, if possible to France, and although I might have a chance of seeing so many more countries, what I wanted was to return to the old world. But the more I thought about it the more powerless I felt. It would be perilous to let myself be seen, for I might perish in the hands of the Taitian children.

The Little Lead Soldier

What then? Suddenly an idea struck me that made me smile. I would get into one of the baskets; there was one quite near me. Very cautiously and quietly I crawled through the spaces of the interlacing leaves and worked along, stretching myself from one orange to another. I cannot truthfully say that I was comfortable, but when I had once been carried aboard the ship I could roam about as I pleased and re-enter my



prison in time for the unloading. You must remember that I had never traveled outside my master's

At Queen Pomare's Court

pocket, and there were many things I did not know about. So after being knocked around among the oranges and between the baskets I wanted very much to get out and take the air. I began jumping toward the steps that led to the deck. Alas! I forgot that I was only a little lead soldier, very small indeed, and it was impossible for me to get up the steep steps. That meant that I had to stay down there with the freight during all the voyage. I can assure you it did not strike me as pleasant.

One night I was seized with a great fear. The ship tossed indescribably; a deafening noise becoming louder and louder seemed to overwhelm me. I did not understand where it came from, whether from the deck or underneath. Suppose the ship should go to pieces. It grew more terrible, a wail like the noise of many voices calling for pity. I could not remain in my hiding place, as the oranges crushed me. I tried to get out, but was thrown from ball to ball. I was bruised, but couldn't help myself. From the bridge could be heard desperate voices and cries of command. Everywhere was terrible confusion. This state of anxiety lasted many hours; then calm returned, and the days

The Little Lead Soldier

before we reached our port near Pekin passed quietly enough.

One day I realized that the machinery had stopped, and after a little the porters began carrying out the cargo and two sailors came for the baskets her Majesty, the Queen Pomare, had sent to the Princess Badoure.

The captain went to the palace so that he might himself present the superb pearl and the branch of coral.



IX. In China

CHAPTER IX

IN CHINA

CONCEALED in my hiding place, I could not see where I was taken, neither the roads nor the entrance to the palace.

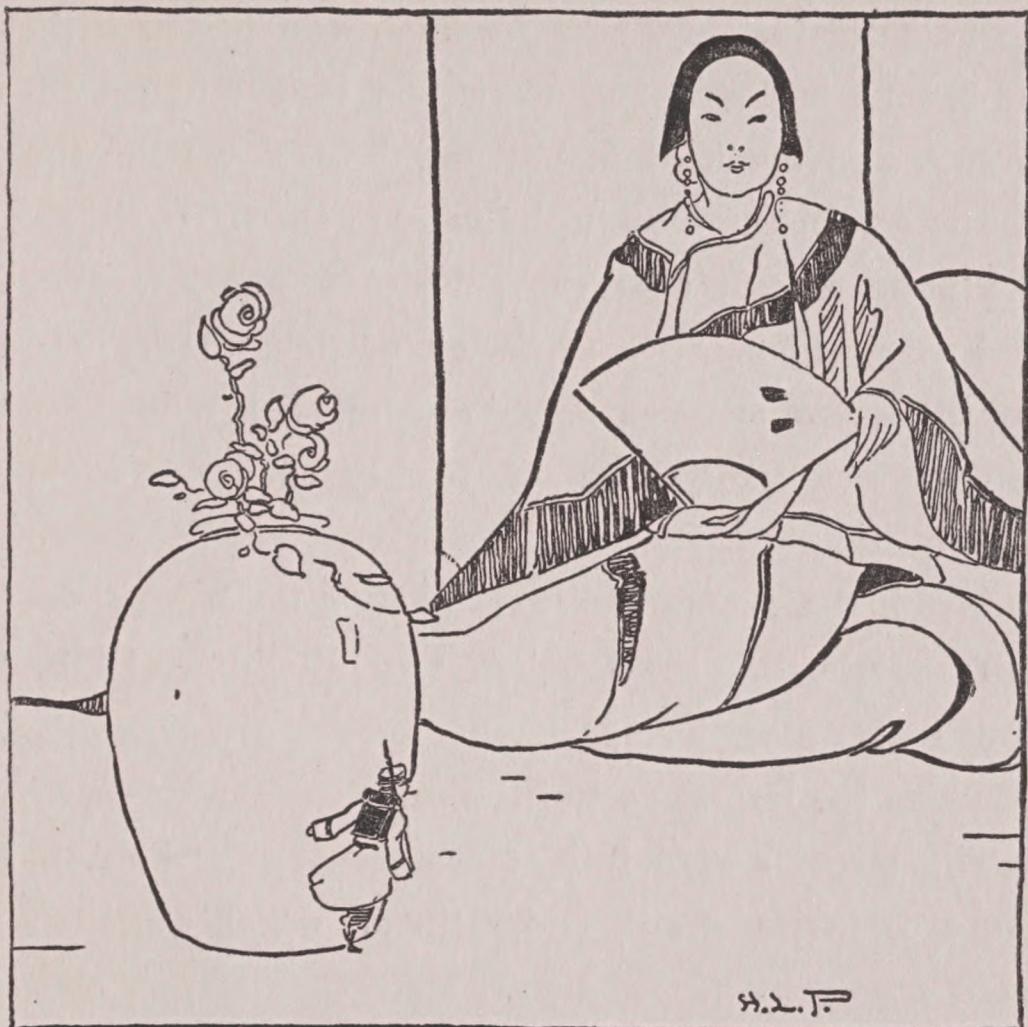
But I was in China, in that country which had been so long a land of mystery to the European. And fortune had placed me in the midst of one of those sumptuous palaces that seemed to be built by supernatural beings. I could not discover any way of getting outside to see and admire the country. I could hear the sweet voice of a young girl speaking a language I did not understand, but the interpreter explained it in French to the captain, so I made out that she was thanking Queen Pomare for the exquisite fruit and rare pearl. She ordered one of the baskets to be opened and the fruit to be piled in a cabinet near the room where she passed many hours of the day embroidering silk flowers and queer birds, making up bouquets and preparing refreshing drinks.

The Little Lead Soldier

As soon as I knew that the captain and interpreter had gone I wished to see the princess, and to try to go about the palace and around the city. I put my head outside very cautiously and found that I was in a beautiful bath room. There was a large tub of black marble at one side, and all around stood little tables covered with bottles and perfumery, and a quantity of cushions were piled in one corner. A pale rose damask curtain hung between the adjoining room and the cabinet in which I found myself, and I could hear the sweet voice of the princess, who spoke in short sentences and little words.

I stole behind the curtain and went into the large room, remaining hidden behind a porcelain vase which held a bunch of roses. From here I saw everything. I did not think the princess handsome, but allowing for the difference between the Asiatic and European faces I was sure that she was one of the most attractive of the Chinese women. She had a full face and a small nose, and her almond shaped eyes seemed to fill most of her face. She wore her hair in a knot at the neck with a quantity of pins stuck in it. Large strings of pearls were about her arms and neck, and she wore

In China



a long straight dress like an overcoat closed at the waist with an embroidered belt.

She lay half stretched out on a pile of cushions of the same color as the portière. Many other cushions were scattered around the room, the floor was covered with a very rich Persian rug, and into this I nearly sank.

The Little Lead Soldier

She talked with a young woman who passed little tid-bits to her now and then, and they laughed together and made bunches of flowers which the younger woman placed in the vases of the room.

I wandered all over the palace. It was immense, and everywhere was a profusion of riches, ivory and porcelain, soft silks curiously embroidered, mountains of cushions, everything of luxury that life could offer.

I saw the rooms reserved for the mother of the princess who, like the daughter, was lying down lazily, and I also saw the apartments of the prince, which occupied the largest part of the palace.

These rooms were full of ornaments; on the walls hung draperies of silk and satin on which sentences were written.

Among the furniture there were screens and pictures and beautiful lanterns hung from the ceilings. I entered at last into one of the inside temples called Miaio.

I visited the park, the gardens and the stables and then, very tired, I returned to Princess Badoure's room after a day spent traveling around the city.



In China

In the morning early I left the palace and took a long road full of people; I glided close to the houses so as to escape being seen, and found myself in a large square where many people were gathered gesticulating. I was curious and hid myself in the crowd, and on account of my small size I easily entered the center of the group. A poorly dressed man was bound at his wrists and was kneeling down, while another with a big stick prepared to strike him. I could not understand why, but some words spoken in French by two sailors made me understand that he had killed some animals without permission. Perhaps it was a working ox, and this is a great crime in China where agriculture is held in greater honor than in any other country. Even the Emperor once every year cultivates a field, and the animals that aid in this cultivation are treated as the friends of man.

A woman, perhaps the wife of the prisoner, talked with a bad looking man in ragged clothes and another older one entreated the man with the stick in his hand to wait a few minutes.

Finally the younger woman gave some money to the ragged fellow, who agreed to take the whipping, while

The Little Lead Soldier

the bands were taken off the man who knelt, and he went off happily.

I was wondering how it happened and finally, from the conversation of the sailors near me, I learned what was the reason for the strange change. It seems this is the way justice is practiced in China. It matters little who is to blame or who gets punished. If the condemned man has money enough he can easily find some starving fellow to take his whipping. Sometimes he can even find some one willing to give up his life and in this way earn a blessing for his family. A strange method of justice!

The poor fellow raised himself with difficulty after the strokes, as justice shows no pity. I was very sorry for him, but I was curious to know what he would do next, so I stayed to watch. As soon as he could move he went off toward a poor quarter of the city, where he bought some rice, which the Chinese sow in the mud, where it rapidly reproduces itself. Then he indulged in the luxury of a duck prepared according to the custom of the country, by being dried between two stones. Then after getting some oranges and bananas he knocked at the door of a hut which was opened to

In China

him by a thin, poorly dressed woman holding a little child by the hand. At the sight of all this food the woman began to cry, not from joy, however, for she saw from her husband's face how he had come by this provision.

At last the wife calmed down, and while she put the things away the father played with the little boy, and caressed a little girl about seven years old, who was seated on an old bed.

I thought she might be ill, but looking at her closely I understood what the trouble was. The little one wore bandages on her feet attached to an iron shoe, a device they put on girls to keep their feet from growing. It deforms them, of course, and turns their feet into stumps without grace or beauty, but for this the Chinese do not seem to care. This barbarous custom has existed for many centuries, and the Chinese preserve it, thinking it gives to girls a finishing touch of attraction.

I lived for months in the garden of the Princess Badoure, and I began to understand the language while hiding behind the furniture and passing the nights in the park. I lived in an enviable state of

The Little Lead Soldier

peacefulness, when a strange event occurred, and changed me for a time into a motionless piece of lead, but gave me in exchange the gift of speech.

This is what happened. One evening while I was looking at the white swan floating on the stream that ran under the trees of the park I saw a black boat coming toward me with two persons in it, one rowing and one steering. They stopped just in front of the little door that led to the apartment of the princess. One of them got out and standing by the door gave a long, sharp whistle. Pretty soon the door opened and the princess came out, her head wrapped in a thick veil. She got into the boat, followed by a servant and the man who had whistled. The servant took the oars and the boat soon disappeared down the stream and was gone for two hours. Then the princess and the servant who opened the door with a key went inside the palace and the boat glided away and all was silent.

This happened every evening for several days, and when I was inside the palace I saw that the princess wept bitterly and threw herself on the cushions when she reached her room after coming in from the boat. I was full of curiosity, and longed to understand the

In China

mystery. I knew that the women of China are guarded closely, and this going out at night was very strange. I kept my ears open to hear all the conversation of the servants, but Abdallah, the Mussulman servant, was very secretive, so that nothing ever leaked out to the ears of the other servants of the princess or the maids of the princess' mother.

One evening the princess went out alone and the unknown man who called her sent away the boat. I stood as I always did on a tuft of grass near the river. They seated themselves on a rustic seat near me and then I could understand enough to solve the mystery. The unknown man was the son of a rich gentleman, but was not, however, a great dignitary of the court. Still, the princess had been promised in marriage to him. In China it often happens that the betrothed do not see each other, but this man had seen his fiancée and fallen in love with her. Just then his father had fallen into disgrace with the prince, and the engagement was broken, to the great grief of both, so now that they could not endure their lives without seeing each other, they were helped to meet by two faithful servants.

The Little Lead Soldier

But poor Badoure did not suspect that she was in love with an infamous traitor, nor could she imagine that she was to be saved from bitter remorse and sorrow by a little piece of lead.

It amused me so to watch when anything strange was going on that I never missed any of those meetings, and one evening I went a little earlier than usual to observe the lovers. As I waited a boat appeared bringing four masked men, who got out and hid themselves in the park, then another boat came with four more men and then another, then Badoure's fiancé arrived in a fourth boat. He clapped his hands lightly and drew the twelve men together, talking to them earnestly for a long time, and never dreaming that an invisible ear could hear all that was said.

What I heard made me shudder. I trembled as I thought of the plot. What could I do to save this peaceful family from the wickedness of this man? He had hidden his followers near the door where the princess came out; she was to be seized and her servant killed. They were then to steal into the palace through the princess' room and the rooms of the prince and the mother princess and all were to be murdered

In China

without pity. More men were paid to surround the palace and wait for a given signal to enter, this being the placing of torches in the windows. All their plans were perfect—but they had not counted on Tamburino.

My one desire was to reveal the plot at whatever cost. I was filled with fury at the thought of the infamy of the man that would betray the affections of a woman for the sake of avenging a just punishment inflicted on his father, and my feeling gave me strength and courage far beyond my size.

I ran, jumped and leaped to the great entrance of the palace.

First I went into the vestibule, attached myself to the chain that rang the alarm bell and pulled it hard. Then, as the bell rang out, with tremendous effort I went into the apartment of the princess, which I reached just as she stopped at the door, surprised at the unexpected alarm.

In an instant every one in the palace was on foot.

They ran from room to room, unable to understand who had rung and what had happened. The princess was in great trouble, and I knew well enough that I

The Little Lead Soldier

had not sufficiently revealed the plot. But it was enough for that evening, and all I could do.

If I could only speak one word. I prayed with all my might that I might be useful. My good genius had listened to me once before, and now—I felt that I could speak !

With that I scrambled on to a table and told the princess all I knew. She was alarmed at the sight of the little soldier, horrified at all he told her, not only that she had been so deceived, but the thought of the danger to the lives of her parents.

“Lead me to them, little friend, but swear that you will not tell my secret. Say only that these men are thieves.”

Alas, with the power of speech I had lost the use of my legs. I could make little motions, but I could not walk ten steps.

But she lost no time. She went directly to the place where the traitors were stationed, had them taken and bound, and the next day they were hung in the square.



X. In the Chinese Court

CHAPTER X

IN THE CHINESE COURT

FROM that day I was surrounded with devotion. The mother of the princess, the Prince and Princess Badoure all adored me. They kept me always with them. I was even taken to the Imperial court, where the prince held a high position, being a famous mandarin who had many friends and knew much about diplomacy.

There was constant coming and going from the apartments of the princess to those of the mother and father, and also from the prince's palace to the Imperial court. I went to see the festivals and dinners, but I was happiest when with the princess. She told me all the sorrow caused by the treachery of her lover, for in spite of his infamy she wept at his death.

I consoled her as well as I could. I told her about my travels and all I had seen, and described our

The Little Lead Soldier

European houses and furniture, the customs of the women, and the way they dressed. She was full of enthusiasm, and wondered at the liberty they enjoyed, and at how they could be out without a chaperone and attend dances and balls. She longed to take a trip to Europe, where she might be distracted and cease to think of the past.

About this time the prince went away on an embassy to the king of Persia, and was absent many months. When he came back he rested and refreshed himself, and then sent for the mother of the princess and said :

“ My wife, fortune has smiled on our house.”

“ And in what way, Sire ? ”

“ The most powerful monarch of Persia has learned that we have a beautiful daughter, trained in every virtue, and he has deigned to take her as wife for his first-born son.

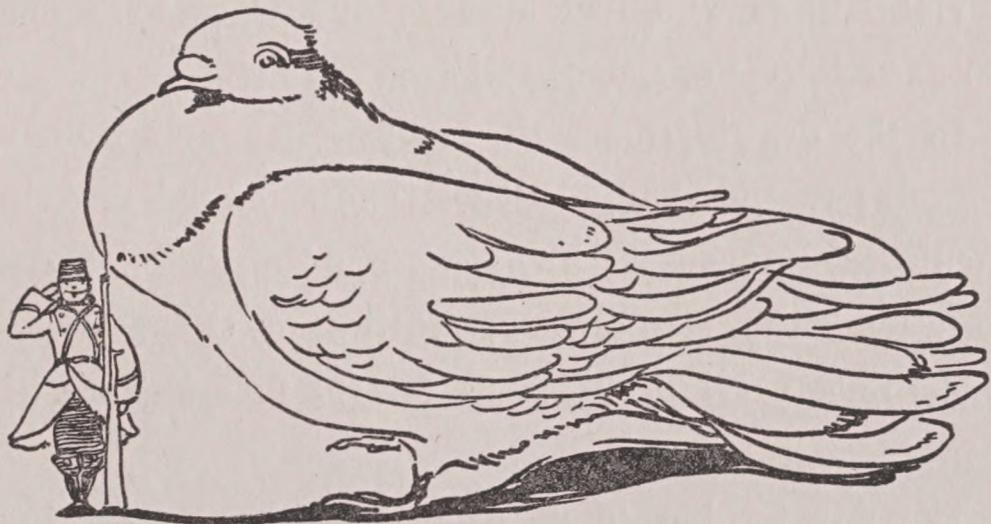
“ Your daughter will then become queen of Persia, and soon, as the powerful ruler of Persia is tired of reigning, and will abdicate in favor of his son.”

Badoure’s mother wept for joy, and ran to tell the good news to her daughter who, however, did not show much enthusiasm.

In the Chinese Court

She told me afterward that she still treasured the memory of her traitor lover, and she also said that I had made her long to see Europe and perhaps to live there.

I tried as hard as I could to comfort her, and succeeded by telling her that when she was queen of Persia she could ask the king to take her to France and Italy. So she yielded and was very grateful to me for my advice.



"I shall never leave you, you know, my dear Tam-burino; you and my dove shall always follow me," the princess said.

Badoure adored a dove she had which her faithful Abdallah had trained to count the hours, cooing as

The Little Lead Soldier

many times as the clock struck, and to fly to the arm of her mistress when she called, and to pick rice from her plate, and to do a thousand little tricks.

There were now endless festivals in the prince's palace. Boats illuminated in every fantastic way floated on the river. Some carried minstrels, making gay music beneath the trees of the park, others carried, under silk awnings, guests who enjoyed many little delicacies at the tables, others drifted carrying the jovial fellows who had stuffed themselves with fish fins, swallows' nests, eggs and sweets.

In the drawing-room there were men and women dancers; in the shady walks servants offered refreshment—joy reigned everywhere. The Emperor deigned to attend the last fête, presenting to the Princess Badoure a pearl necklace fit for the future queen of Persia.

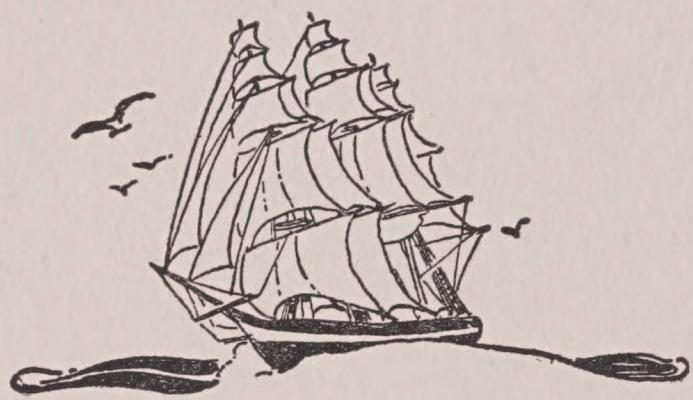
The day for her to go away arrived. Everything was ready, and many boats waited in the neighboring ports to carry the immense amount of baggage which she and her father were to take to her lord and husband.

I was confided to the care of Abdallah, who

In the Chinese Court

sailed in the vessel carrying the most precious objects.

So on a splendid spring morning we left Pekin to set sail from the nearest port, accompanied by the cheers and good wishes of the happy crowd.



XI. On the Way to Persia

CHAPTER XI

ON THE WAY TO PERSIA

BEHOLD me on the way to Persia ! The journey promised to be long, for whenever we stopped for coal or provisions there were celebrations with music, illuminations and dinners. And everywhere deputies waited on the future queen to beg her to stop over in that city.

The magnificent and most powerful king of Siam ordered more spectacular festivals than we saw anywhere else and he offered presents to the princess truly worthy of the king that he was.

So after many days of travel we doubled the peninsula of Malacca and entered the Bay of Bengal. We were to stop a few days in Ceylon, where the prince wanted to make some purchases. Abdallah took great care of me, knowing how dear I was to his little princess, and fearing that I might suffer he had taken me out of the jewelry box and kept me on his bureau near his swinging bed.

The Little Lead Soldier

One day Abdallah didn't feel well, and so he lay down, feeling sure his sickness would soon pass. But by the end of the day he had a high fever. Before going to bed he said to me:

"Listen, Tamburino, before I go to bed you must promise me that you will not move. I may be ill for several days, and I don't wish to make you uncomfortable by shutting you up in the jewelry box. You may keep me company and talk to me, but only when we are alone. Don't let any one else on board know what you can do, for some one might carry you off while I am asleep."

"Don't be afraid," I answered, and I decided not to speak a word, whatever might happen.

But Abdallah's sickness grew worse, the fever increased, and the doctor on board could find no remedy.

They spoke of letting the princess know, but they were afraid of interrupting the journey, so poor Abdallah continued to grow worse. No one knew anything about him, and even I could not rouse him. So he died while the sailor set to watch him slept soundly.

The next day there was great consternation. What

On the Way to Persia

should they do? Was it better to tell the prince or not? The majority voted not to tell, and they prepared for the funeral very stealthily, so that no idea of the misfortune should reach the other ship on which were the prince and princess.

Abdallah's body was carried beneath a cover by two strong sailors, and a third proceeded immediately to clean out his cabin, as he had had a contagious disease and it was necessary to bury all his belongings with him. The sailor gave the jewel box and other valuable things to a faithful servant of the princess, and everything which was not thrown into the sea was disinfected.

Everything, including me, was carried to the deck with Abdallah's body. You may imagine my excitement. How I now regretted my lost ability to move. What strange destiny awaited me?

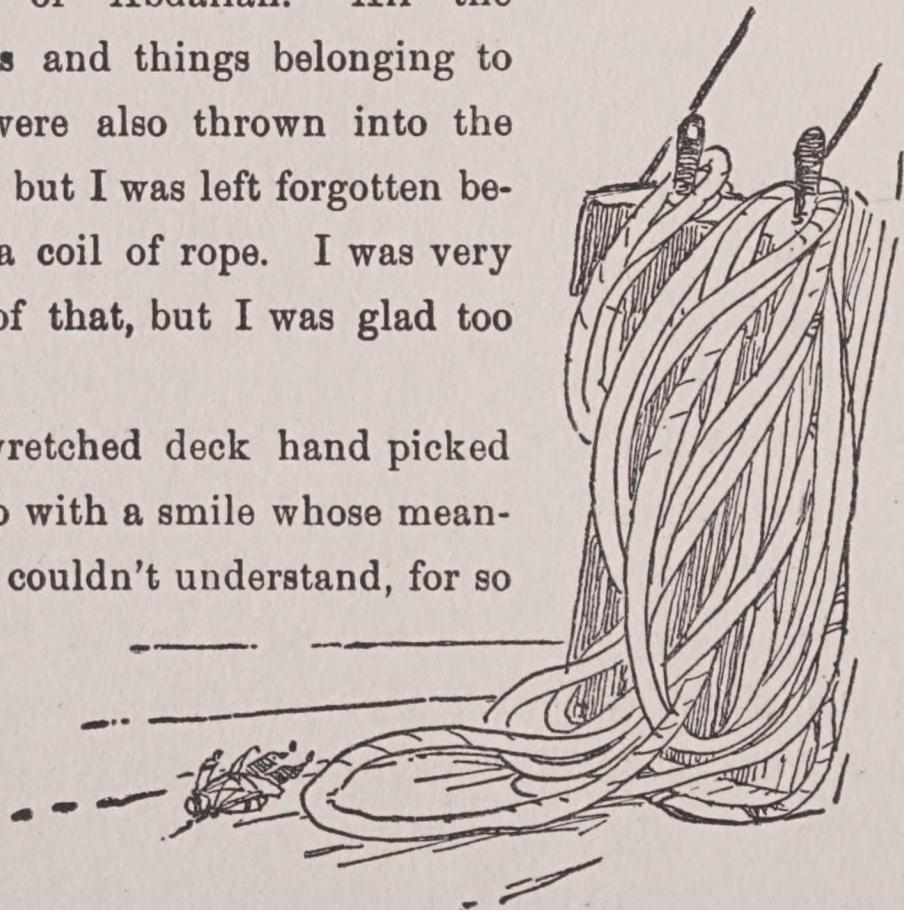
The sailors joked and passed me from one to another, wondering why Abdallah had taken care of such a strange plaything. Then they threw me a long distance from the place where the burial service was, and I hoped to stay there forgotten until I could think of a plan by which I could again make myself

The Little Lead Soldier

known and get back to the care of the princess' family.

Abdallah was sewed up in a sheet, a cannon-ball was fastened to his feet, songs and prayers, such as are used by Buddhists, were said over him, and he was lowered into the sea. The water opened and closed, forming large circles which grew less and less. And then the boat sailed on, and nothing more could be seen of the grave of Abdallah. All the clothes and things belonging to him were also thrown into the water, but I was left forgotten behind a coil of rope. I was very glad of that, but I was glad too soon.

A wretched deck hand picked me up with a smile whose meaning I couldn't understand, for so



On the Way to Persia

far I hadn't spoken a word, and I was sure that no one knew about me. So I thought I would keep still and study his character and after I knew something about him I would promise him a reward if he would take me back to Princess Badoure.



XII. Tamburino Falls Into Bad Hands

CHAPTER XII

TAMBURINO FALLS INTO BAD HANDS

"JOY is a passing smoke," some one has said, and so indeed was mine. When I understood what was to happen it was too late to save myself.

This fellow was passionately fond of fishing, as indeed all Chinese are. Although he had been forbidden to do so he fished on the sly. The captain of the ship had been told that the cook was in league with him, and furnished him with bait. I couldn't make out what the bad boy was going to do. I saw that he tied one end of a silk thread to the chain of the anchor but I had never seen that kind of fishing, and I didn't guess how I was to be of use. Then when he tied me to the other end of the silk I was filled with misgiving, and when I saw the fish-hook tied not far from me I was overcome with fright. I tried to speak, but I was too late; the boy had thrown me into the water, and my small voice was swallowed up by the depths of the sea.

The Little Lead Soldier

Dragged furiously through the water by the speed of the ship and through myriads of fish I was a secure prisoner. A little fish was caught on the hook, but it shook itself free, and I was carried along by force, desperate, seeing no way of escape. At last the silk became weakened at the place I was tied and I watched with terrible anxiety as I saw the end of all hope. I was like one condemned to be hung, whose only salvation lay in the possible sudden death of the executioner.

The silk broke and I was precipitated into the abyss.



DRAGGED FURIOUSLY THROUGH THE WATER



XIII. At the Bottom of the Sea

CHAPTER XIII

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

HOW long I was falling who knows? It was a dreadful sensation, and I could not hope ever to rise again. I did not suffer in any way from the water, but only from the fear that I should always have to stay down there. And indeed how could I ever hope to see the sky again? Was I destined always to keep passing from joy to sorrow and never to know peace? I had wept over my brothers, but they were really happier than I, for if their lives had been short they had at least never known anguish like mine.

For many days I knew nothing of what went on around me, but only that I rested softly on the seaweed with immeasurable depths of water above me. I was not resigned but calmer, for every terrible fear ends in time; and then I began to look about my new dwelling.

At my right were mountains of rock with high steep

The Little Lead Soldier

peaks and large crevices peopled with beings such as I had never seen before, which swarmed in hundreds on one side of the rocks, while on the other thousands of pearl oysters stuck fast. There were enough to make a whole nation rich. You see no man had ever yet reached this part of the sea, and no unfortunate negroes with diving belts had been sent here to risk their lives twenty times a day.

Gigantic fish swept by, making havoc among the small fish, and little by little I got used to looking at life through this veil of water. Here in the unknown depths I saw once more hatred and fury, fear and pride. I saw the strong use his strength to overcome the weak, and the weak resort to tricks and knavery to escape the strong.

I saw around me graceful fish defending their homes from their enemies, and colossal shells that kept watch of their prey: strange growths, like flowers, attached to rocks that swallowed all the smaller fish that passed near them, and thousands of strange animals. I call them animals because I saw them pass and repass, but I did not know whether they were animals or plants. They were swaying threads as fine as hair, bound to-

At the Bottom of the Sea

gether in bell shape; and there were beautiful starfish and many others I did not know and can't now remember.

There were long banks of coral and mother-of-pearl, some immense as mountains and some beginning to be formed, some small, some in groups, some like islands, some like continents—and all made by very small beings who are among the wonders of nature.

These coral animals work silently but endlessly, and are continually renewed. Tiny, fragile creatures, born in the depths of the sea, they increase enormously and cover the rocks of the ocean, building them into the islands of the Pacific.

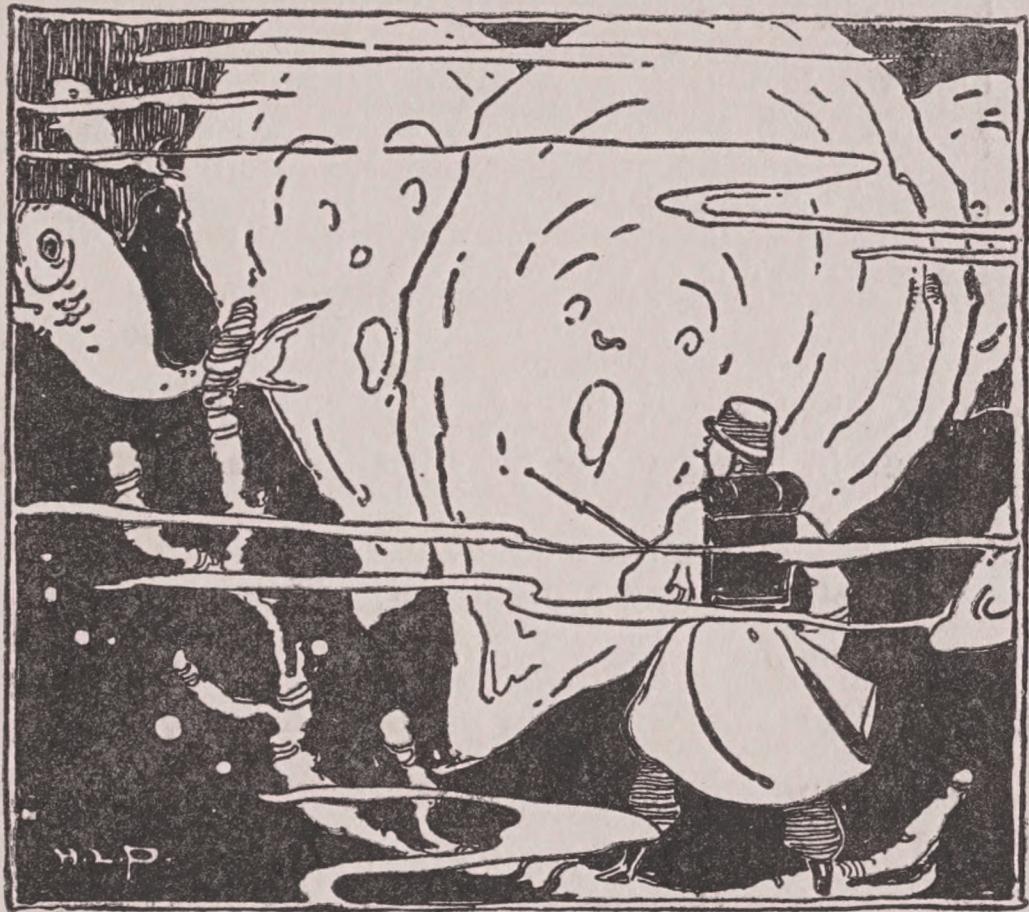
All alone in the midst of this life and movement, this new world of grandeur, I was profoundly unhappy; and yet I could not help admiring its superb beauty, which was waiting to be discovered. What happiness was here in store for some poor diver or pearl fisher, who, carrying out his dangerous work, should discover this wonderful bank of oysters. Here, waiting for some one, were all these beautiful "tears of the sea," as oriental poets call pearls. For you must know that they come from a kind of disease of the

The Little Lead Soldier

oyster. A grain of sand, an egg of a fish or some piece of foreign matter gets between the walls of the shells and around this is deposited a material which grows and develops into the beautiful thing we know as a pearl, which all the world prizes and cherishes. So this jewel that women delight in is due to the suffering of a tiny animal living at the bottom of the sea whose whole world lies inside his own shell.

A slight movement of the water, never stirred to its full depth, aided by the slight movements I could myself accomplish, brought me little by little nearer to the oyster bed, and so slowly that I didn't realize it. I found that I had traveled all the way around the rock. Here another view was opened before me, more terrible, more sad. At a little distance there lay the half-destroyed boat of some pearl fishers. The bodies of the two negroes lay as though they were asleep down there where they had come hoping to capture jewels and earn money enough to feed their families. But these bodies were not long spared by the dogfish, the vultures of the sea, and this boat remained an object of curiosity to the fish, and a refuge for the shells, which attached themselves to it as to a rock.

At the Bottom of the Sea



Now the water carried me along into a mound of oysters, and I remained a prisoner in the midst of all this treasure. I had said farewell to land, I had resigned all hope and waited for my end sadly and resentfully. I prayed ardently to be able to regain the full use of my legs, for then I could climb the rocks and might find a way to get out of the water.

Was I near the land? I wondered. Should I not

The Little Lead Soldier

be somewhere between Malacca and Ceylon? If so how was it that this beautiful bank had never been found? I had a thousand theories and hopes, but as many disappointments. Meanwhile I was as fast to the rocks as one of the oysters.

But my good genius had not forsaken me. Once more I was to be saved, and once again I was to see the sun in its glory, and not through this impenetrable veil.

At last, after weeks of anxiety, of hope and fear, I saw above me a great brown man. He was a diver. He had a stone fastened by a rope to his right foot, and on the other he had a net bag. With one hand he held his nostrils, and with the other he clung fast to the rope. He saw at once the treasure that lay at his feet, filled his bag with shells, pulled tight on the rope and was drawn to the top. Then he reappeared with other men, and up and down they went for hours until the rock was nearly cleared.

But the treasure seemed inexhaustible, and I knew they would come again, so hope sustained me. I was certain I should be found, as I lay close to a beautiful oyster. But before my release I was to see one of those

At the Bottom of the Sea

tragedies to which these pearl divers are always exposed.

One of the men who had gone up and down for the tenth time, happy in the thought of his reward, had filled his sack and was preparing to go up when from behind him appeared a shoal of dogfish. Suddenly he saw them, and seized the rope desperately; it was pulled quickly, but not soon enough. The highwaymen of the sea leapt upon him, and the poor man knew no more. The rope was drawn up without him.

That day no one else came down, and for many days there was no more fishing. Again I lost hope.

Still, there were many oysters in that place. Would they give them up? At last some one ventured again, then came another and another, and the work went on quickly once more. So far only the shells at the top had been taken, and the extraordinary beauty of those underneath had not been noticed. But at last by accident one man came lower and discovered the beauties waiting him, and he came again and again.

And so after a while I felt myself in his hands gathered up with the oysters I had been lying near so long. I seemed to him as strange as if I were a case

The Little Lead Soldier

of books at the bottom of the sea, but he did not drop me, and carried me up to the light.

Oh, the joy of that experience ! No one can imagine how I trembled on seeing once again the glory of the sun's rays. According to my calculation I had been in the sea a year, and I was dazzled by the splendor of the sun, which shone like diamonds on the water. I was happier than I had ever been before, and when the negro threw me into the boat, expecting to find out later where the little soldier came from, I couldn't resist saying "thank you."

The man who had found me may have regarded me as a supernatural being, or he may only have thought to make money out of me, but he was evidently afraid of losing me. He took me up again, wiped me off carefully, looked me all over, and begged me to speak once more. So before them all as they lay resting about me I told my story in a feeble voice, grown weak from my long silence.

"I know that story," one of them said.

"Why, how is that?" asked another.

"Don't you remember how the Princess Badoure, now queen of Persia, stopped at Ceylon ? Every one

At the Bottom of the Sea

talked of the sorrow of the princess at the loss of a little toy of which she was fond."

"It was I. Poor princess! she would certainly give a large reward to any one bringing me back to her."

"Do you believe it?" whispered the one who had found me.

"I'm certain of it," I said.

He thought it over by himself, while the others besieged me with questions. After a while he was convinced that I was not a god of the sea. Then he took courage and spoke to the owner of the boat.

"Master," he said, "since Fortune has smiled on me to-day, will you be as generous?"

"What do you ask?"

"I will give you my son for a year without pay to fish in my place if you will give me in exchange the oyster I picked up at the same time as this wonderful toy. I will not open the oyster now. If there is a pearl inside so much the better. If not, so much the worse. But I should like to be free for a year."

"You ask too much; I may be giving you a fortune."

"Who knows? But you know my boy is skilful,

The Little Lead Soldier

and the bank from which I took the oyster has thousands like it."

"Well, may the gods give you luck. I suppose you wish to carry the plaything to the queen of Persia."

"Yes, master."

"And with it the pearl?"

"If there is one."

"Very well; to-morrow your son may fish in your place."

"May God bless you."

You may imagine, children, with what anxiety the fisherman opened the oyster when he reached his cabin. He had told the story to his wife and children and they stood about him waiting for the result of the bargain that might mean the beginning of a true fortune. Indeed even I was interested. I had at last brought a blessing to this poor family.

The oyster was opened and, marvelous to relate, it had in it the most perfect and brilliant pearl that a fisherman of Ceylon had found in many years. His joy was so great he overwhelmed me with blessings.

"But don't forget, my son, I have bought this pearl with a year of your hard work and, if I sell it, it may

At the Bottom of the Sea

bring less than I could earn in a year. And we must faithfully keep the agreement with the master."

" You may be sure I will do that," the boy answered.

The pearl was polished until it was magnificent in brilliancy. I was sewed up in a little bag attached to a leather string that the fisherman passed around his neck, and the next day he started for Persia.



XIV. Treachery

CHAPTER XIV

TREACHERY

I WAS not really comfortable in my little bag lying on the brown breast of my rescuer, but the thought that I was on my way to a splendid court and would again be near the Princess Badoure made me endure my prison patiently. Indeed, I had learned to adapt myself to all circumstances during my life of adventure.

I ought to say that sometimes he took me out of my bag, when no one could see me, and tried to make me talk. But they were short respites. Almost immediately he put me away again, he was so afraid of being seen.

From my prison I heard all that he said, and I learned that he expected to make the journey on foot, getting a ride now and then in a cart for a few cents.

The journey was long—fearfully long, and the negro felt the seriousness of it. The peninsula of Hindustan is large and dangerous, and after he crossed that it was

The Little Lead Soldier

still a long way to Teheran, where the king of Persia lives. Shut in as I was I can't describe what happened on that trip.

On the frontier of Persia he met a Mussulman merchant with whom he struck up a friendship, and who promised to guide him so that he could shorten his journey. He offered the use of one of his camels without pay, as he had just sold out all his wares and was on his way to Teheran to buy more.

My good man was touched by his courtesy, and did not see through the crafty Mussulman, who suspected there was some mystery, and thought by being so polite he would make the negro reveal his secret.

Nevertheless, the fisherman said nothing, and succeeded in making the merchant believe that he was traveling to Persia to find a rich brother.

One evening the Mussulman persuaded him to drink some Greek wine that he was carrying to a rich Christian. It was exquisite wine that he had bought on his last journey to Athens, for which he was to receive such a good price that he could afford to give a bottle to a friend. The fisherman allowed himself to be persuaded, but resolved not to drink more than one glass.

Treachery

But the merchant gave him little cakes and dried fruits, also from Greece, and chocolates and candies from Europe, until before he knew it the negro had drunk the whole bottle.

This loosened his tongue a little, but not enough to please the merchant. Still between laughing and joking he let out the fact that he was carrying something precious to the queen of Persia. By the time the merchant asked what the object was the poor negro was sound asleep, with his head on the table.

The Mussulman asked no more questions. He laid him on a straw bed, and began to search him carefully. Soon he began to be impatient, and not finding anything he was concluding that it was only the wine that had put the queen of Persia into the man's head, when he felt the little bag under his hand. He opened it quickly, with hands trembling partly with the curiosity he felt to find out what was inside and partly from fear of being found out. He stood still with surprise and perplexity on seeing me.

"Could this be the precious object?" he asked himself. He was about to close the bag, feeling himself betrayed in his greed and curiosity, when he ran his

The Little Lead Soldier

finger once more around the inside and there found the beautiful pearl which was worth a fortune to the fisherman.

A cruel smile spread over the old man's face. He hesitated whether to take it at once or whether to think out a plan by which he could get it without running into danger. Then he put it back, not wishing to run any risk to his life or liberty. He left the fisherman alone until they were close to



the walls of Teheran, and then invited him to a farewell dinner before he should continue on his journey to Bagdad. He took him to an inn whose host was a famous cook.

They dined most joyfully, and the merchant brought out another bottle of the famous Greek wine, into

Treachery

which he had put a drug. The fisherman persisted in asking him to share the bottle, but he always refused, saying that his religion forbade him to drink, especially on that day, which happened to be the birthday of Mahomet. The fisherman believed his excuses and went on until he had finished the bottle alone. But as he drank his last glass he felt very sleepy, and though he struggled to keep awake the drug was stronger than he, and he fell under the table so sound asleep that a cannon shot would not wake him.

As soon as the merchant was sure that the fisherman was asleep he opened the shirt of the sleeping pearl diver and carefully took out the pearl, putting in its place an artificial jewel of the same size that might at first be mistaken for it.

All this I had to watch, knowing myself powerless to stop him. If I had spoken or moved he would have seen that I was the object so precious to the princess, and he would have taken me also from the unfortunate sleeper. Meanwhile I, at least, was left to him, and he might still hope for a rich gift from the queen of Persia, who would certainly remember me, and reward him for my return.

The Little Lead Soldier

When the fisherman awoke he was disgusted with himself for having gone to sleep, and he scolded himself to think that he had not enough sense to part from the merchant, simply thanking him for his great help and kindness.



XV. The False Pearl

CHAPTER XV

THE FALSE PEARL

I WHO now knew so much of the goodness of one man and the treachery of the other, was so indignant I could hardly speak. But I shouted with all my might. When he heard my voice he took me from the bag.

“What did you say?”

“I say that you were robbed by that old wretch.”

“Robbed of what? I still have you and the pearl.”

“But the pearl is false.”

“False—false, did you say?”

“Yes, your secret was discovered the evening you went to sleep over the Greek wine.”

“But I didn’t talk; at least I tried not to.”

“No, you kept your secret, but you let out that you were on your way to the queen of Persia, carrying to her something precious, and the old man wanted to find out what it was that was worthy of being offered

The Little Lead Soldier

to a queen. He poked about you till he found the pearl. He did not guess that I was part of the gift."

"But why didn't you warn me of the danger? Why didn't you tell me I had been searched?"

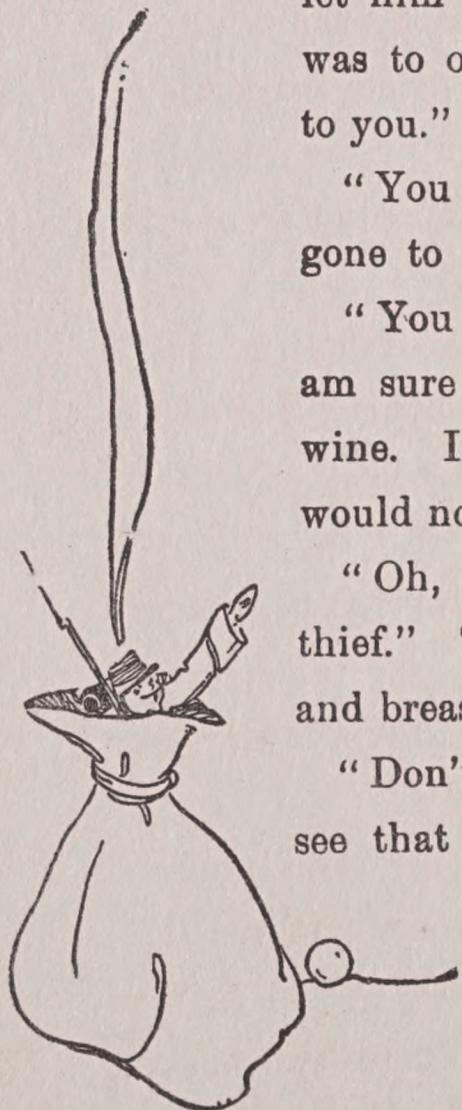
"Because I had no opportunity, and I didn't wish to let him know that I was the key that was to open the gates of the kingdom to you."

"You were right. Oh, if I had not gone to sleep that second time."

"You were not to blame then. I am sure he put a sleeping drug in the wine. I suspected it when he said he would not share it with you."

"Oh, the rogue, the murderer, the thief." The poor man beat his head and breast with his fist.

"Don't despair," I said; "you will see that you will still be welcome to the Princess Badoure; and I will not forget to tell her of the sacrifice you made so as to bring her a gift worthy



The False Pearl

of her, beside receiving me from the bottom of the sea."

So he calmed down and began to put his things in order. He bought a new coat with the little money he had left, and then with great fear and timidity he presented himself at the palace. He was not allowed to enter, and the governor of the palace was called to see whether he was fit to be received by her Majesty.

"Who are you, and where did you come from?" he asked roughly.

"Tell the most powerful queen of Persia that I come with news of Tamburino, and that I have come from Ceylon on foot to bring it to her."

"Wait here."

After a minute the governor of the palace returned and in a very different voice said :

"Come in, come in, good man, her Majesty, the queen, awaits you with impatience."

In a beautiful room filled with rare and precious objects, her Majesty, the Queen Badoure and her husband, the magnificent king of Persia, waited for the coming of the promised news. The fisherman knocked at the door three times; then, entering, he knelt with

The Little Lead Soldier

his arms held out, and kissed the ground before drawing near to the cushion on which the beautiful Chinese princess was reclining. Resting on one knee, he stretched out the hand in which he was holding me to the wondering Badoure. She recognized me with cries of joy.

“Good man,” said the king, “you have conferred great happiness on her Grace, my wife, and all that you ask shall be given you.”

Then it was my turn to speak.

“Most powerful king,” I began, “this man has come on foot from Ceylon, enduring every danger and fatigue so that he might bring me in safety to my gracious mistress. He found me at the bottom of the sea, into which I had been dropped by a rascal of a boy. And beside bringing me back he wished to present to her Majesty a gift worthy of her beauty. This was a pearl which he had bought in exchange for a whole year of work by his son, and which was the most perfect jewel the sea could produce, larger and more splendid than any other found in years. But, alas, your Majesty, a thief has robbed him, taking his jewel and putting a false one in its place.”

The False Pearl

"Give me his name."

"I do not know it, but he was a Mussulman merchant."

"Don't distress yourself, my good man," said the king; "you shall be well rewarded for your trouble and kindness, and you need no longer be a pearl fisher. Return home for your family, bring them here, and I will find a place for them in my court."

After that their Majesties listened while I told my story, sympathizing with all I had suffered and assuring me that now I should have a quiet life filled with happiness.

The fisherman was dressed in fine clothes and given a gold purse full of money, and orders were given that he should be sent with a retinue of mules to the nearest port, where a ship waited for him which would carry him to Ceylon and in which he would bring his family back to Persia.

So at last the fisherman was a happy man, and I was thankful that it had come to him through his kindness to me.

But as usual I rejoiced too soon. I had forgotten the bad Mussulman. Assuming a disguise, he mingled

The Little Lead Soldier

with the servants of the palace, and through their gossip he learned that I was the precious object that had been brought to their Majesties, and that they cared nothing about the loss of the pearl. Then he was seized with an uncontrollable desire to possess me, and he made a plan to carry out his idea. He came to the gatekeepers of the palace asking for an audience with the queen, saying that he had the most beautiful pearl in the world for sale.

The king, thinking at once that this might be the thief, gave orders for him to be admitted, telling the guards to keep close watch and to capture the man when they should hear the king give the signal, which was to be the blowing of a silver horn hanging at his belt.

In the meantime the merchant, dressed as a rich Arab, waited in an apartment where the Princess Badoure had placed me in a basket. That was all he wanted. He thrust me into his bosom, suffocating my voice, too feeble to be heard, and went off without waiting for the return of the servants. No signal having been given he passed out in safety, and went to a little house, where he shaved his head, changed his clothes, and made himself unrecognizable.

The False Pearl

Two days later he started for Bagdad, from there he went to Jerusalem and then on to Cairo, where he counted on selling me to the viceroy of Egypt, together with the stolen pearl, as two rare and precious jewels.



XVI. Among the Robbers

CHAPTER XVI

AMONG THE ROBBERS

BUT the plan of the Mussulman failed, and he received the punishment he deserved for all his wickedness.

As soon as he reached African soil he fell into the hands of thieves, who robbed him and left him half naked in the desert. As he had put me into a beautiful box with the pearl and other jewels, which he probably had also stolen, I was now in the hands of the African thieves. There were many of them, but they soon separated and went in different ways, and the first time I was taken from the box I saw only one man. He had a bronzed face and a gray beard and was dressed in a white mantle draped about his head.

He turned me over and looked at me closely and was about to throw me away as a useless thing, when I decided it would be a good plan to make him understand that I was worth a little more than most toys, and that I deserved special consideration.

The Little Lead Soldier

When he first heard me speak he was afraid, then little by little he realized that he could make money out of me as well as out of the jewels in the box, and after that he was immensely careful of me.

He made me talk every time he stopped to rest, and he wanted especially to have me describe the magnificence of the courts I had visited, particularly the Chinese.

He walked for days without stopping, and apparently without any planned direction, as though he were afraid of being followed and of being surprised. After many days we arrived at a forest full of magnificent trees; the ground was covered by interlacing plants such as I had never seen before. Now I was indeed desperate. I suspected that my new master was not an honest person, and I knew nothing of him, not even his nationality. His fear of this solitude communicated itself to me so that I also was afraid. Was I to be rescued from the bottom of the sea only to perish in an African forest?

He walked on feverishly all day without resting, always hoping to find a village, a tribe of negroes who might understand him and put him on the right road.



HE WAS IMMENSELY CAREFUL OF ME

Among the Robbers

At night dreadful cries and screams could be heard, and he trembled with fear, and had scarcely strength to climb a tree to save himself from the wild beasts. Night passed to find him more anxious and afraid each day. One night, too tired to climb a tree, he remembered that one way to protect oneself from wild beasts was to light a fire. So he gathered branches and dry leaves and started a fire big enough to last two hours while he slept.

Around the circle of flame lions and tigers howled furiously and smaller animals hovered near, attracted by this light such as they had never seen before. The man ate the food he had in a bag and he was able to kill some birds and small animals like hare which he cooked up into food enough to last till he came to the end of the forest. But it would have been better for him if he had not left the forest, for here he fell into the hands of a savage tribe, perhaps the Galla, a wild people without religion.

The miserable man was bound and put into a tent to await his sentence, which was put off, as the chiefs of the tribe were busy making preparations for war with neighboring tribes. Here he waited famishing,

The Little Lead Soldier

while far off he could hear ferocious cries and agonizing noises of battles which are not carried on by guns and cannon, as ours are, but are just as terrible. The women were as bloodthirsty as the men, and dragged off from the tribe many of the men as prisoners; and among them was the unhappy possessor of my little person.

My children, these scenes return to me many times. It would take too long to tell you of all the atrocious battles at which I was present. The tribe of savages lived by fighting and capture; they cut off the heads of the men they conquered, and sometimes calmly ate the rest of the body. How many such horrible banquets I have seen!

Here Tamburino became silent. It may be that he was overcome by the memory of all these horrors or that at present he could talk no more. But the children, although they meant to listen quietly, and never interrupt him, were too excited to keep still.

“Was your master also eaten?”

“And you?”



Among the Robbers

“How were you saved?”

“Tell us—be good.”

So the little soldier began again.

Once more I had the chance and the happiness to be useful to some one. After terrible fighting, passing from one victorious tribe to another from north to south, we fell into the hands of a tribe living on the shore of Lake Tchad. It was the most savage of all, and the most difficult of any to escape from. My possessor was tied to a tree and left all night, while they prepared him for slow torture. Then the idea occurred to me that I might save him from death and myself from an uncertain existence. So as soon as we were alone I began to speak to him. The man had been bound around the body and legs, but one hand remained free. With this he drew me from the little bag hidden under his coat so that he could hear me better and understand what I wanted. I told him to let me out and let me stay near him so that I could speak to the savages when they came to kill him.

“But what shall you try to do?”

“Leave that to me. I wish to make one last effort

The Little Lead Soldier

to be saved. What men are these, and where are we?"

"We are on the shore of Lake Tchad, in the midst of one of the worst tribes known."

"All right; we can deceive them more easily."

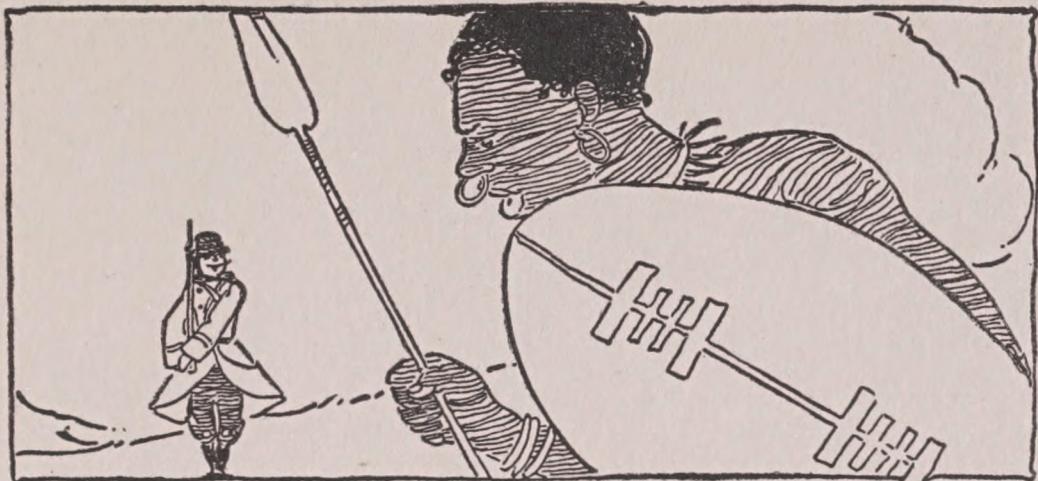
"But they can't understand you."

"Never mind."

"May Allah protect you."



XVII. Tamburino is Worshipped as a God



CHAPTER XVII

TAMBURINO IS WORSHIPPED AS A GOD

FTER a while the savage negroes came near armed with strange instruments. Just as they were about to seize the prisoner I cried with all my strength, in Arabic :

“ Stop ! ”

I could see they heard me, for they stopped as if uncertain, and listened. Then thinking they were mistaken, they set to work again, but I cried again :

“ Stop, or the curse of Allah be on you.”

This time they heard distinctly, and they fled in great fear, not knowing where the voice came from.

They poked out their heads from behind trees and cabins to see if they could make out where the hidden

The Little Lead Soldier

voice was. Although I could not make out what they said I could guess at the meaning from their voices and gestures. One of them, perhaps the chief, knew a few words of Arabic, probably taught him by some missionary long ago killed and eaten. Finally, growing tired of waiting, he came out and demanded in Arabic :

“ Who spoke ? ”

And then they discovered it was I.

This was my chance. I invented all sorts of unearthly threats and told them it would be an unlucky day for them if they did not set their prisoner free. Imagine the fright of these primitive people. They picked me up and carried me in triumph. They called me the child of the sun and moon. They thought me a god come to earth to protect them. They made feasts and sacrifices for me, offering the most beautiful animals, and would have offered women and boys also if I had not told them I abhorred human blood, and no more must be spilled, or they would come into great misfortune. Then they danced about me by the light of torches or great fires, and finally, the prisoner being released, they treated him with

Tamburino is Worshipped as a God

great honor as the favorite of a god, and they gave him presents of weapons and fruit, and two elephants' tusks, which he could sell for a large sum of money as soon as he reached his own country.

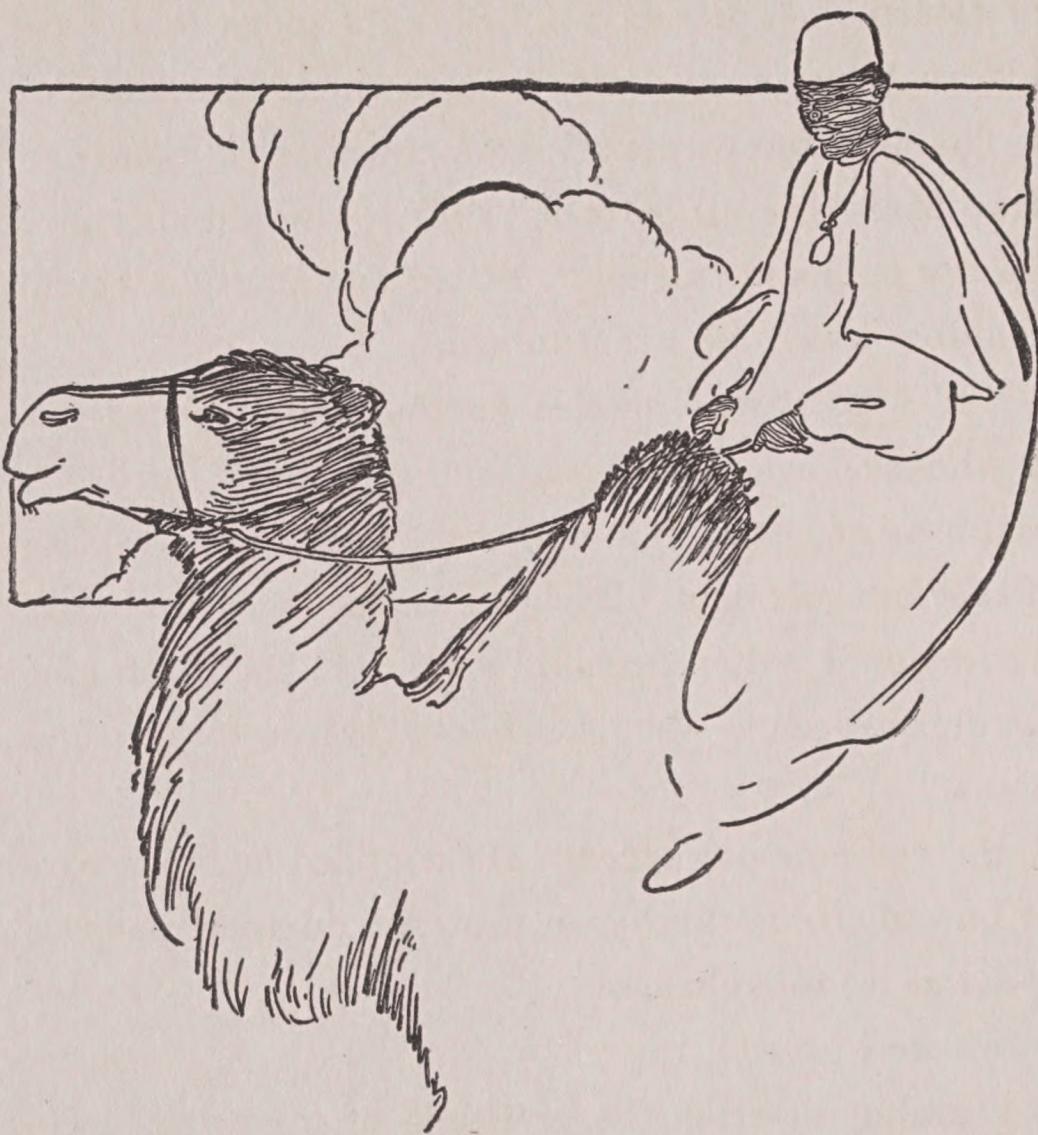
Now that we no longer had to fear for our lives we had to plan for our return.

But how should we manage it? The neighboring tribe, the enemy of this one, heard of the little god descended to earth to protect the prisoner, and they all wanted to see and hear me. I was tired of them all, and so was my owner; also he was anxious to get away, not feeling really safe among them. We dreaded the outbreak of war with the other tribe who wished to get possession of me.

One morning, when the chief was alone absorbed in prayer before my small person I took courage and spoke to him thus:

“Listen, beloved son of the moon. I believe you worthy of confidence, and I wish a service of you which shall be paid by me so that I shall make you the chief of this tribe and it shall belong to you and your sons for centuries. But I have heard that far off in the north where the white men live another be-

The Little Lead Soldier



loved son of the moon suffers atrocious agonies, and I must save him. I must go, and I ask of you that you furnish an escort for my faithful servant, whose duty it is to carry my Divine person, as far as the great desert, the country where we shall be safe. I promise

Tamburino is Worshipped as a God

to return and protect you before the moon shall have hidden herself three times from the eye of his adorers."

The chief was perplexed, not knowing how to answer. He offered me all sorts of bribes if I would only give up my proposed journey. I tried to think of a way to convince him. So I said to him :

" If I go it will be also for the good of your tribe. I who see everything know that a hostile tribe is planning to attack you and carry me off by force, and if they are successful all of you will be sacrificed. You know how I abhor human blood. If this catastrophe should happen I should be lost forever to you and yours."

He was now persuaded. He confided us to the care of one of his faithful men, who should accompany us as far as we thought best.

We were saved !

I cannot describe the gratitude of my owner. He called down a thousand blessings upon me, and promised never to leave me until he could return me to the queen of Persia.

Nevertheless this was the very man who sold me to your uncle. But he really meant his promise at the

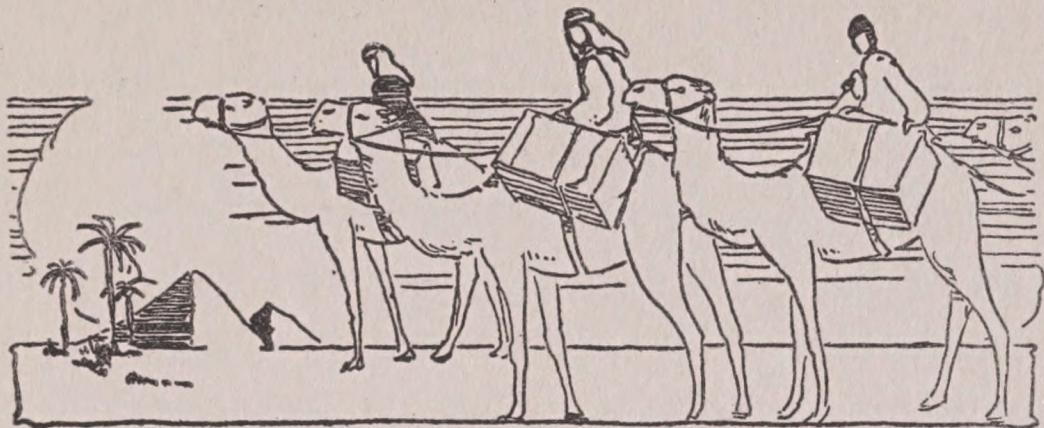
The Little Lead Soldier

time, for I believe he then adored me more than he did his prophet. I had certainly saved him from this fierce tribe by Lake Tchad. We traveled for days without trouble, for our guide knew how to escape every danger, and he was proud to be protecting the Son of the Moon.

At the beginning of the desert of Sahara we left our guide, and after a while Ali—that was the name of my possessor—met a caravan of merchants, to whom he offered some jewels in exchange for food and camels. And so, riding a good camel, we were able at last to take the road to the north.



XVIII. The Desert on the Way to Algiers



CHAPTER XVIII

THE DESERT ON THE WAY TO ALGIERS

OH, the long monotonous journey. The interminable way with no outlook but the yellow sky and heavy clouds, which can't be distinguished from the sand. The always receding horizon, which seems further away every minute you walk.

A long line of camels travels on and on, bearing merchandise and household goods on their backs, and cheered forward by the monotonous song of their drivers.

Sometimes the unfortunate travelers are seized with uncontrollable thirst; such is their desire for a refreshing drink that they run toward an oasis as soon as they see it, but the more they run toward it the more the promising spot recedes before them. This is the effect

The Little Lead Soldier

of the mirage, and their disappointment makes their agonies of thirst harder to bear.

But the caravan with which we traveled was fortunate enough to come to several real oases, which might be described as islands in a sea of sand. Here palms are growing, for there is a spring, and here travelers rest and renew their supply of water.

The men of the caravan were honest and kind and treated Ali like a brother.

At the boundary of Algiers they separated, and each took a different direction, having business in various countries. Ali went into Algiers. He hid me away, and took the best of care of me. He never talked to me any more, but I believed his idea was to take me back to Queen Badoure; and since I had been the means of saving his life he would not have sold me at any price.

Many months passed. He had sold to a French jeweler for a great price the pearl he had stolen from the Mussulman merchant, but as he had lost the goods he had bought with that money he was still very poor.

One day as he was complaining bitterly that he had

The Desert on the Way to Algiers

nothing to eat I advised him to part with me, but not to sell me to a cruel boy who would treat me badly. I said I should gladly return to Europe, and the thought almost made me cry.

"Really," I said, "I am almost old, and I feel the need to rest after all the adventures of my hard life."

He was thoughtful for a while, then he thanked me and swore he would never sell me except to some one he knew well; and he would take less than I was worth if he could only be certain that I would have no more suffering. And soon the opportunity came. This is how it happened that he sold me to your uncle. And he in his turn told me that you were fine children, and would always take care of me.

And now I have come to the end of my long story about my adventures in countries unknown to you. I have had an exciting life, but I have had chances to be useful in my small way, and I believe every one can be, no matter how little he is, if he wishes to and tries hard.

Although I am nothing but a piece of lead many people have loved me, and I feel my turn has come at

The Little Lead Soldier

last to rest in peace for the rest of my life with you, my dear friends.

There are still a few things I often think I should like to know. Did my good Renato die at the Pole or did he come back triumphant? Does Ivan still sail the Pacific Ocean, and does the queen of Persia still care for me and hope to find me?



XIX. Conclusion

CHAPTER XIX

CONCLUSION

NINO and Lena had become very fond of the little soldier, who had shown himself so kind and so intelligent, and after they had listened to him quietly for many evenings they begged their father to find out something about the people he had cared so much for.

After a while he was able to trace Renato, and he found he had not reached the Pole, but he was perfectly cured of the wound he had received from the bear. He had returned from his journeys and adventures and after a while had written a book that had brought him fame and money. After that he had married a lady he had known all his life, and they lived far from France.

Ivan, they heard, had become captain of a fishing vessel, and had made trips to the north of Europe. He had married the sister of Rink, whom he loved so much.

The Little Lead Soldier

As to the queen of Persia, they could get no news of her, but Nino promised, as soon as he was grown up, to go to Teheran and find her.

I can't say how true it is, but I was told that Nino became a great traveler, and that he carried Tamburino to Persia with him. And as by that time he was a person of great importance he was given an audience by the queen, and had a chance to present the little soldier. There Tamburino was honored and feted. But when he was asked if he would stay at the Persian court he chose to finish his days with Nino and Lena, because he said they had taken better care of him than any one else, and had loved him more

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



00024893960

